The Culturalisation of Development in Nairobi: A Practice-based Approach Toward Understanding Kenya's Urban Audiovisual Media Environment

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Declaration for SOAS PhD thesis

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Abstract

This thesis is a theoretically and methodologically grounded study of the practices of media production within the development field in Nairobi, Kenya. As various media technologies have taken root in everyday life throughout the city, aid and development agencies have found powerful new platforms for achieving their mandates to bring about social and economic change. Concurrently, struggling media professionals have found in the economies of development a rich new source of funding and creative opportunity. By turning to consider the complex and imbricating practices through which media productions harness – and are in turn themselves harnessed *by* – the development sector, this thesis contributes vital new research into the media and development nexus in contemporary urban Nairobi.

By turning toward a study of what I call the 'culturalisation' of development, I signal an explicit inversion of the instrumentalist assumptions at work in much scholarship on media and development. In exploring the culturalisation of development in Nairobi, we shift our attention from questions about how useful media technology is for development, toward questions of what happens when a development project seeks to *use* culture to achieve its development goals. Based around a practice-based ethnographic analysis of two media productions that took place in Nairobi between 2012 and 2013, this thesis presents a novel approach to understanding a complex urban media environment. This research reveals that not only can media products that emerge from moments of culturalisation be seen to be determined as much from 'below' as they are from 'above', but furthermore the very notions of culture and development are themselves contested and disrupted in the process of their production.

What this thesis offers is a detailed ethnographic analysis of media production in the context of development. It provides insightful research for scholars interested in critical media studies and development theory, as well as scholars interested in media production ethnography in the context of African film studies.

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Illustrations

List of Acronyms

AECID	Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CISP	The International Committee for the Development of People
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CVF	Cultural Video Foundation
CVP	Cultural Video Productions
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
FCAT	The African Film Festival of Córdoba (formerly of Tarifa)
ICT4D	Information and Communications Technology for Development
IRC	International Refugee Council
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Networks (a news agency)
KIFF	Kenya International Film Festival
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NURRIA	Nairobi Urban Refugee Rights Integration Activities
RCK	Refugee Consortium Kenya
SFF	Slum Film Festival
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
ZIFF	Zanzibar International Film Festival

Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis is a theoretically and methodologically grounded study of the practices of media production within the development field in Nairobi, Kenya. Nairobi is a city saturated with narratives of its developmental future: we hear repeatedly of 'slum upgrading' projects; of the city's technological boom and the new empowering and liberating potentialities of digital media; of a wave of Kenyan audiovisual production that has finally started telling Kenyan stories. Yet the city is also marked by a booming private technology sector, persistent economic and spatial segregation between the city's affluent classes and its precarious outlying informal settlements, and the inflection of audiovisual storytelling with the limited narrative interests that flow from an industry heavily influenced by NGO[1] funding. As various media technologies have taken root in everyday life throughout the city, aid and development agencies have found powerful new platforms for achieving their mandates to bring about social and economic change. Concurrently, struggling media professionals have found in the economies of development a rich new source of funding and creative opportunity. By turning to consider the complex and imbricating practices through which media productions harness – and are in turn themselves harnessed *by* – the development sector, this thesis contributes vital new research into the media and development nexus in contemporary urban Nairobi.

[1] Non-Governmental Organisation – commonly 'NGO' – has become a particularly indistinct term, referring to a large group of development and aid organisations which often receive some form of government funding, and represent a large range of economic, political and social interests. In Kenya, an NGO is a legally registered entity, in much the same way as a Limited Company might be, with the addition of a developmental mission or mandate, and a non-profitable structure (such that any profits generated cannot, legally, be distributed as dividends to stakeholders). They are often a required legal formation in order to qualify for the receipt of certain types of development funding from governments or grant-giving bodies. An NGO differs in Kenya from a 'Community Based Organisation' (CBO), which has a less rigorous legal structure, is cheaper and easier to register, and is generally expected to serve the needs of a particular and well defined community of people. Both CBOs and NGOs are generally grouped within the broader category of 'Civil Society Organisations' (CSO).

In finding a language with which to speak about the problematic relationship between media and development in Nairobi, I put forth here a notion of the 'culturalisation' of development. In the simplest sense, this notion of culturalisation seeks to signify those moments in which culture is articulated within the framework of a development project. It announces an initial circumspection within the definition of our object of study, focusing our attention on those instances in which a development project takes up 'doing cultural work' as a tool for achieving its developmental goals. In the context of scholarship on media and development, however, the term also has a divisive function. The articulation of media in relation to the broad social and economic project of international development has often been limited to solutionist arrangements that treat media technologies as more-or-less efficacious tools for delivering on development goals. Whether the direct approach of the ICT4D movement, which finds in 'the digital' an opportunity to promote particular ideas about democracy and equality, or the more aestheticised forms of representation evidenced in issue-based NGO film production, 'media' has been generally subsumed within a developmental logic that prioritises outcomes, impacts, and measurable social and economic change. Such an arrangement not only relies upon an instrumentalised understanding of media technology, but naturalises 'development' into a set of ethical and humanistic principles that somehow stand outside the histories and contexts of their application.

By turning toward a study of 'culturalisation' within this scholarly discourse, I signal an explicit inversion of this instrumentalist assumption. Drawing on a critical nomenclature elaborated by Ernesto Laclau that invites us to frame the social and the political as discursive formations articulated within conditions of antagonism (and as such thought of as inherently open to transformation), this approach proposes a radical rethinking of the arrangement between 'media' and 'development'. By treating development as a site of contested practices, rather than a set of political and social ideals, we open ourselves to critical considerations of the mediation of development itself within a complex and changing urban environment. 'Culture', on such an account, is therefore thought of as something articulated, expressed within various frameworks of meaning, and made to do different

kinds of semantic work on different occasions, and for different purposes. The turn to consider the culturalisation of development in Nairobi is therefore a turn away from questions about how useful media technology is for development, and toward questions about how, and under what specific material and discursive conditions, various professionals and practitioners produce culture within the context of a problematic and contested development field. How, and in what ways, do development projects seek to *use* culture, and in turn what can this tell us about the cultures of development themselves?

In approaching this enquiry, I present two ethnographic studies of development-funded audiovisual media productions[2] that took place within the city between 2012 and 2013. In the first, I analyse the production of *Wazi?FM* (2014), a feature length film about Somali urban refugees and terrorism in Nairobi, focusing in particular on the practices of scriptwriting, and the careful mediation of the funder's expectations by the film's producers. In the second, I turn to study the evolution of the management and organisation of the Slum Film Festival, a yearly project for promoting local filmmakers and 'film culture' in Nairobi's informal settlements of Kibera and Mathare. Both of these cases represent related yet distinct examples of the culturalisation of development in Nairobi. In the case of *Wazi?FM*, culturalisation presents itself in the moment in which development professionals working on a project about urban refugees turn to the production of a feature film as a way of better achieving their goals in peace-building and human rights advocacy. In the case of the Slum Film Festival, culturalisation takes on a different form: rather than seeking to produce a single cultural text, the Slum Film Festival was invested in producing a cultural event intended as an incubator for 'film culture' in two of Nairobi's informal settlements. While very separate projects in terms of scope and discursive framing, *Wazi?FM* and the Slum film Festival both demonstrate a vital coincidence of discourses on culture, development, audiovisual representation, and Nairobi's urban communities. Through a methodological

[2] I will use the term 'audiovisual' to speak about the technologically specific form of media production. 'Film' will also be used, as a way to signify particular audiovisual products ('films' or 'film festivals'). Additionally, while the study of popular African audiovisual industries such as those in Nigeria and Ghana have traditionally referred to 'video' or 'video-film' to describe low-cost productions shot on video technology (cf. Garritano 2013), a recent trend has seen a shift toward the study of 'screen media' (cf. Dovey 2015) as a way to include a broader understanding of how people view audiovisual media today – on televisions, in viewing halls, online, on mobile phones, and so forth. However, while useful in foregrounding the material concerns of much emerging scholarship in African media studies, this visual metaphor of a 'screen' prioritises a physical relationship between a viewer and the 'screens' that populate their daily lives. As my own study is less concerned with viewers or audiences, taking up instead a focus on the articulatory practices of production, the term 'audiovisual' seems more appropriate.

triangulation amongst practice-based ethnography, semi- and open-structured interviews, and discourse analysis, this thesis explores what a theoretically informed study of media-related practices might be able to reveal of the discursive formations of 'development' within a complex and contested urban media environment. In doing so, I attempt an interrogation of how different professional and interpersonal relationships drive a collaboration between an urban/modernist epistemology and ethical/humanist politics in urban Nairobi.

Given the interdisciplinary nature of media studies, this thesis contributes to several overlapping scholarly disciplines. Primarily, the research presented here offers a valuable resource for media scholars interested in theorising the intersection of media production and international development in urban Africa. In particular, it highlights the critical value of focusing on moments of 'culturalisation' in development discourse as a way of framing our interrogations of media and development. Within the critical and philosophical interests of media studies, this work furthermore contributes a practical exploration of a practice-based approach to the field of critical media research, and in particular to those aspects of this field which – drawing heavily from the anthropology of media – have taken an interest in appropriating ethnographic methods as a powerful way of interrogating complex media environments. This research also contributes to conversations in development studies itself, and specifically to post-development theory. It does so by presenting an exploration of the dynamics of development as seen from the disruptive perspective of professional media practice. Finally, this thesis presents a useful resource in film studies, and in particular contributes to the recent move within this often textually focused discipline toward more 'materialised' and socially situated analyses (cf. Lobato 2012; Dovey 2015). It does so in two ways: by offering an ethnographic critique of the practices of scriptwriting as an integral part of film production; and in the sub-field of film festival studies, by contributing a detailed working ethnography of film festival management.

Hypothesis and Exploration

In the early formation of this research approach, I drew my defining questions around a single hypothesis. I take a hypothesis here to be an observed fact, from within a particular set of presuppositions and methodological limitations, that invites further testing and exploration. My early hypothesis was that media production in Nairobi is strongly influenced by the economic saturation of the city by development and humanitarian aid funding. The basis for this hypothesis emerged during a period of research into the Kenyan film industry in 2010, when I spent several months talking with filmmakers who were struggling to survive in what they considered to be Nairobi's floundering film industry. Throughout these conversations, I encountered a recurrent theme of 'the NGO problem' of 'humanitarian filmmaking'. On occasions NGOs were seen as a quick way of making the money required to pursue passion projects, and on others as a force smothering a nascent Kenyan film industry with educational and paternalistic narratives. Overall, there was an overwhelming sense that 'NGOs' were having a powerful effect on media production in the city. The hypothesis that resulted from these conversations seemed commonsensical: the development industry, with its limited interest in only certain kinds of stories about African life, was distorting the 'real' voices of African filmmakers.

However, as I will show in several ways across this thesis, once interrogated further this hypothesis starts to show deep limitations as the basis for an approach toward the study of media production and development. Firstly, how do we define 'humanitarian filmmaking'? If we take it as meaning any film that is concerned with issues of equality or suffering in human life, then an awful lot of film starts to look 'humanitarian'. As such, we would need to be able to distinguish films that were about human life, from those that demonstrated 'humanitarian' interests. But on what grounds could we ever hope to categorically distinguish one type of representation of humanity from another? Does a Kenyan filmmaker who decides to use his or her own money to make a film about AIDS become a 'humanitarian' filmmaker? And what if we shy away from thematic considerations, and turn instead to questions of 'foreign investment' as opposed to 'local Kenyan stories'? We quickly arrive at a similar issue: is a film produced with local funding somehow more

'authentic' than one produced with foreign money? Are non-Kenyans *a priori* incapable of engaging with local stories, and likewise are all Kenyan filmmakers 'authentic' regardless of the content of their work? Such a position proposes that a media production's goal should be to represent social and political reality as clearly, directly and honestly as possible. However the internal dissension of any society makes the naïve realism of such a position readily apparent. In a location like Nairobi – a city of middle class economic and professional migrants from Africa, China, Europe, North America; of communities of urban refugees and informal settlements and ethnic divisions; of colonial pasts and neoliberal futures – is it so easy to draw a distinction between 'authentic' Kenyan and 'inauthentic' foreign perspectives?

Stripped of all this presupposition, the statement that funding affects production in and of itself tells us very little. The pursuant questions must be: when, how and in what ways does funding have a relation to the content of what is produced culturally? In exploring these issues, I draw on two extended periods of ethnographic fieldwork during which I undertook practical placements within media NGOs in Nairobi. During my work on *Wazi?FM* I spent six months working as an assistant scriptwriter on a feature film about urban refugees, police abuse, and terrorism amongst communities in Nairobi's Eastleigh neighbourhood. Funded by the European Union, the production was initially designed to promote ideas of social cohesion amongst its Kenyan and Somali 'beneficiary' audiences. Elaborating a practice-based approach, this research offers a unique opportunity to reflect upon the various production-related practices that take place amongst donors, film producers and scriptwriters, while at the same time contributing to broader thinking about how 'culture' is positioned and imagined – by different people, and in different ways – as an important element within the discourse on economic, political, and social change in Nairobi.

During my second engagement, with the Slum Film Festival, I worked intermittently over a period of a year and a half with the festival's coordinating committee during their event's second and third annual iterations. The festival, initially funded by the Spanish Embassy in Nairobi, screens short and feature-length films and promotes 'film culture' within Nairobi's

informal settlements of Kibera and Mathare. By working across two annual editions of the festival, I was afforded the opportunity to develop a perspective on its transformation from an informal, almost haphazard event into a formalised, serious project for 'cultural development'. This ethnographic perspective afforded valuable insight into how 'film culture' was imagined, talked about, and promoted by the event's organisers, and amongst current and potential donors.

By taking up practice-based approaches in this research, I foreground my own positionality within these projects – my own complicity and entanglement within their discursive logic. This approach capitalises on the fact that I myself, as a researcher and practitioner, am not an unknown quantity within Nairobi. My racial, class-based, accent-related and national identities have familiar – if complex – positions within Nairobi. By positioning myself amidst these dynamics, rather than simply 'observing' them as some distant object of interest, the intention here is to better reveal some of the qualities of how my own subjectivity operates within the city's discursive fields of social and political relations.

Before moving on to a more situated account of these two examples of the culturalisation of development in Nairobi, I would first like to briefly lay out an account of the city of Nairobi as a site of study and research. What frameworks for understanding Nairobi have been deployed elsewhere, and how appropriate are they given our present critical concerns?

Naming Nairobi: beyond modernity and urban development

> The jacaranda flowers attract your eye not as colourful springs, but as mauve mists passing away like shadows. Whether sunny or not, the town feels stifled, shrunk unto itself. Noise reaches you through a muffling veil of waving dust. … No onlookers linger, only beggars and street kids stop. Some are seated as they have nothing to lose. Others, sharp eyed, have something to gain.
>
> – Danielle de Lame, *Grey Nairobi* (2010): 151

A range of articles, monographs and edited volumes have been published on Nairobi across the humanities, from urban demography (Bocquier et al. 2009) to cultural studies (Rodriguez-Torres 2010; Ogude & Nyairo eds. 2007) and linguistics (Granqvist 2004), as

well as within broader historical and geographical studies of African cities (Myers 2011; Robinson 2006, 2011; Locatelli & Nugent 2009). While varied in methodological approach and critical engagement, such studies share a common interest: this place called Nairobi, with its indefinite and changing borders, its historical roots and detachments, a space for commerce and media production; a location of both human migration and dynamic social and cultural interaction. Each study narrates Nairobi's social, cultural and political life in different disciplinary languages and with changing critical priorities, resulting in a body of urban cultural critique of significant diversity and nuance.

Much of the earlier scholarship on urban Africa has arguably continued the patronising tradition of the "European 'discovering' African processes" (Locatelli & Nugent 2009: 1), imagining Africa as a continent of "broad crisis" (Myers 2011: 3) to be remedied by models for success perfected elsewhere. This narrative has been particularly pervasive in descriptions of Nairobi, a city often positioned as "an archetype of an African colonial city" (Bocquier et al. 2009) that was "created from scratch" (Charton-Bigot 2010: ix) to meet the needs of British colonial trade. However there has been a growing resistance to this reductionist position within scholarship on urban Africa in favour of more methodologically complex cultural and political analyses. AbdouMaliq Simone's prolific work on global cities has argued for bringing 'periphery' worlds back into discussions about urban life (2001, 2004, 2010; Simone & Abouhani 2005). Simone complicates "occidental notions of modernity" (2010: 15) through an analysis of the new "synergies, cross-investments, commodity chains, distribution networks, production complementarities and alliances" (2010: 15) that mark increasingly complex relations between urban centres in the global 'North' and 'South'. Similarly geographer Jennifer Robinson (2006; 2011) argues against the categorisation of cities as 'African', 'Western', or 'European', presenting instead a notion of the 'ordinary city' (2006). Rather than deferring the meaning of urbanity to generalised economic and geographical terms, this 'ordinariness' appeals instead to the city's located dynamics, its internal dimensions and situated narratives. Advancing a new direction for African urban studies, Locatelli and Nugent (2009) introduce their edited volume *African Cities* with a call for the study of African urbanism to focus on the complex

"interrelations between global forces" and the "specific context and period of time" in which "new competing claims on urban spaces" (2009: 4) play out, accentuating the primacy of situated histories and local strategies in understanding how people adapt to new urban environments. This thriving body of urban research has not only re-posited complex and situated agency as a central research focus, but has helped to develop a synthetic and multidisciplinary resistance to pre-articulated historical narratives of social, cultural, and political life in urban Africa.

While some contemporary studies of Nairobi resonate with this body of work, a considerably larger catalogue of research initiatives and corresponding reports have been produced from the late 1940s onwards which rely upon totalising perspectives that seek to delineate and define the parameters of urban life and its economic, political and cultural meanings. Notable examples of these earlier reports include the *Nairobi Master Plan for a Colonial City* (1948), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) report on employment and poverty reduction (1972), the 1976 Nairobi Urban Study Group and its *Nairobi Metropolitan Growth Strategy* (1976), and UNESCO's 1976 *Nairobi Recommendation* (1976) and Pierre Moulinier's follow-up report *The Situation Ten Years Later* (1986). This body of reporting, bearing the mark of their funders' varying vested interests, sought to measure, quantify and inflect with their own agendas an image of Nairobi and its character.

Many of these earlier reports take a perspective that treats the city as an economic and political singularity, albeit a highly complex one. Irrespective of its internal conflicts, Nairobi is often theorised here as a modern economic space of unilateral urban growth and development. One of the earliest rigorous studies undertaken of Nairobi, the International Labour Organisation's (ILO's) *Employment, Incomes, and Equality* report of 1972, premises itself on such a perspective, reducing the question of Nairobi's urbanity into one of the economic potential and optimal organisation of urban labor. Seeking to strategically address high unemployment and rural poverty in 1970s Kenya, the report constructs a rural/urban dichotomy in which "from the vantage point of central Nairobi, with its gleaming skyscrapers, the dwellings and commercial structures of the informal sector look indeed like

hovels" (ILO 1972: 5). Here, the qualities of 'urban Nairobi' signify something defined as separate from rural poverty and its association to an informal labour sector. Nairobi is made to stand for a new economic promise of work, its modernity signified through population growth and infrastructural expansion.

Building upon the ILO report, Bocquier, Otieno, Khasakhala and Owuor (2009) produced a socio-demographic survey which extends a quantitative account of Nairobi beyond a purely economic interest in labour and its urban/rural dichotomy into a more sociologically and historically nuanced analysis. Through 1,577 demographic surveys (or what they term 'biographies') collected from across Nairobi's nine administrative districts (2009: 45), Bocquier *et al.* seek to build a "social and demographic diagnosis of the city" (2009: 18), asking "how can a city with so many assets nurture so much poverty?" (2009: 1). Using large statistical demographic datasets, supplemented with a methodologically unclear "Event History Analysis" (2009: 49-50) through which they seek to somewhat soften a purely quantitative analysis with historical depth, they build a broad picture of the demographics of entry into economic self-sufficiency in the city. Their work, similar to the ILO report of 1972, then goes on to make recommendations to policy and management of Nairobi's resources to best address issues of poverty, labor, and the formalisation of its economic markets.

There is a narrow economic definition of 'modernity' at work in both Bocquier et al. (2009) and the ILO report (1972), toward which both reports seek to signpost a vision of 'optimal urban development'. The modernisation of Nairobi is here articulated in relation to the physical expansions of the city's territory to accommodate an expanding population and diversifying labour markets (Bocquier et al. 2009: 9-11; 132-134), and to infrastructural development at local, national, and international levels. It is a 'modernity' made synonymous with productivity, employment, and growth presented as characteristic of the "unprecedented rapidity" (Locatelli & Nugent, 2009: 2) of urban expansion on the African continent. This narrative is embodied today in the promises of the Konza Techno City

project,[3] a Kenyan Ministry of Information Communications and Technology initiative to build a new 'technopolis' on the western edge of Nairobi targeted for completion in 2030 and promoted as Africa's 'new silicon valley'. Nairobi is, in the perspectives introduced by ILO (1972) and Bocquier et al. (2009), a growing and formalising urban centre whose modernity has been made synonymous with capitalist innovation and economic diversification.

Urbanisation has in this sense been taken as a marker of a country's social and economic development. Writing about studies of African cities more generally, Garth Myers (2011) suggests that analyses of urbanism in Africa have often measured African cities against other non-African standard-bearers of modernity. This traditional approach, as Robinson argues, is caught between conversations on modernity and development in which African cities are imagined as having "borrowed their modernity from wealthier contexts" (Robinson 2006: x), resulting in a body of academic literature on African urbanism in which scholars have a tendency to "think and write across the whole of the continent" (Myers 2011: 3). By reducing urbanisation to processes of economic expansion and human migration, understandings of African cities have been framed through what historians Locatelli and Nugent critique as the "pre-conceived schemes and analytical frameworks" that position "Africa as the victim of global processes imposed by external economic forces" (2009: 3). In their framing of Nairobi as a complex solution to questions of poverty, income and employment, both the ILO report (1972) and Bocquier et al. (2009) arguably become epistemologically essentialist in a similar sense. The urban modernity at work in these reports is a teleological modernity defined by models for economic success developed elsewhere.[4] While they may be useful introductory accounts of the tectonics of urbanity and its sectors, industries, and technological innovations, what these perspectives are less equipped to analyse are those aspects of urbanity which are neither statistical nor purely

[3] http://www.konzacity.co.ke/

[4] This essentialism might be largely attributed to the limitations of any quantitative methodology which, while providing extensive coverage, offers limited cultural and political depth of analysis. Sensitive to this limitation, Bocquier et al. include a small two page section toward the end of their work entitled 'Social and Cultural Factors', in which they address the puzzling conclusion drawn from their data that "origins and cultural affiliations" (2009: 190), by which they narrowly mean ethnolinguistic background, have no effect on entry into economic self-sufficiency amongst adult populations in Nairobi (2009: 190 – 191). Bocquier et al. go on to admit that this problematic finding may arise from the limited scope of their methodology, and might in fact demonstrate a subtlety which could only be identified through further "qualitative, non-representative analysis" (2009: 190).

economic: the complex environments within which media production takes place, and the conflictual relations between those agents and actors who navigate these dynamic spaces.

Recognising this deferral of the meanings and functions of African cities to models of urbanism established elsewhere, Robinson advances a theorisation of the 'ordinariness' of urban location (2006). Her argument is that scholars must study cities on their own terms, through carefully situated research and analyses, rather than draw upon assumed narratives about what cities are and how they operate. This move turns our focus away from urban modernity as an economic utility, and re-opens a treatment of modernity as itself a divided and inherently contested notion. A body of qualitative cultural research on Nairobi has emerged over the past decade which takes seriously this contestation. In their edited volume *Nairobi Today*, Charton-Bigot and Rodriguez-Torres (2010) bring together a series of short yet intense glimpses into a range of Nairobi's social and cultural worlds, resulting in a vision of the city from which the volume takes its subtitle, as a 'fragmented city'. In his work *The Bulldozer and the Word* (2004), linguistics scholar Raoul Granqvist presents Nairobi as the stage upon which the dramaturgy of postcolonial politics plays out through architecture, street theatre and public transport. Nairobi, on Granqvist's account, is a city balancing at the apex of conflict and interaction. It is a city carved out by strong lines of distinction, expanding upon what Kenya's first President Jomo Kenyatta was signifying when, in 1947, he referred to the capital "Gecomba-ini" (Kenyatta 1947: 15): 'the place of strangers' (Muoria-Sal, Frederiksen, & Lonsdale 2009: 249, note 120) or 'place of the heedless' (2009: 389, note 68).

In feature film *Nairobi Half Life* (2012), director David Gitonga evokes a Nairobi similarly conflictual in character. The film's protagonist Mwas, a young man from rural Kenya coming to Nairobi for its financial opportunities, falls into living two lives: that of a street criminal, and that of an aspiring actor. His life in the city is also divided between two places: the outlying slums of Eastlands, and the prestigious downtown National Theatre. The film's title metaphor is strikingly suitable in this respect: the half-life of radioactive decay, decline and depletion, co-qualifies the outward-reach of radiation, its radiating and destructive energies

and creative, constructive optimism. During the course of this thesis research I traveled frequently between the economic extremes of the city's neighbourhoods, moving between media production offices based in the affluent Westlands, the informal settlement of Kibera, and the district of Eastleigh. Westlands, historically a European region of the city, today houses several large shopping malls and office complexes, as well as the bulk of nightclubs, bars, and casinos frequented by upper-middle class Kenyans and European and North American professional migrants. Kibera, often ironically (and inaccurately) celebrated as East Africa's largest slum (Robbins 2012), has become the safe frontier for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) wanting to engage with slum communities. Eastleigh, on the other hand, is a site of conflict amongst the Somali, Ethiopian, and Kenyan communities living around Mlango Kubwa[5] and the Kenyan government, with Eastleigh becoming a 'proxy' for Mogadishu, a domesticated theatre for the consequences of Kenya's military intervention in southern Somalia. The 'ordinariness' of Nairobi to which this thesis hopes to contribute some small part is that found in the city's internal dimensions and dissensions which deny easy categorisation. The naming of the city, in ways suggestive of progress and growth, of insecurity and creativity, as a place of heedless strangers, marks what Hélène Charton-Bigot sees as the Nairobi's complex dynamics of contested "communities and identities" (2010: xii). Nairobi as a site of research is accordingly treated here as a city of multiple and manifold urbanities: of various histories and agencies which invent and reinvent themselves on a case-by-case basis; of human immigration and heedless strangers; of interweaving economies and situated knowledge and manifold articulated idealisms, dreams, ambitions and imaginaries. If this thesis might be seen as contributing to ongoing conversations on urbanity it should be in terms of the city as contested, full of friction, undecidability, and change. In its fractured and multiple character, Nairobi is seen to offer the basis for an ordinary resistance to a developmental history of modernity and modern life.

[5] Mlango Kubwa, Swahili for 'big door', functions as a passageway connecting the slums of Eastlands and central Nairobi, a busy transportation and business hub. It is a region of the city where I spent much of this research engagement.

Nairobi's Audiovisual Media Environment

The Nairobi to be explored in this thesis is a city rich in contested narratives of its growth, change and development. In order to present an analysis of the imbrication of media production and the development sector within this complex site of study, it serves to first present a brief overview of the history film production in Nairobi. Doing so will not only provide a firm contextual foundation for this research, but it will also allow us a better appreciation of the complex professional media environment within which the subjects of this research live and work.

Various forms of media have taken an increasingly central role throughout Nairobi over the past few decades. As the Konza Techno City project indicates, Nairobi has been articulated as the location of one of Africa's most significant technological booms. Broadband internet access has recently been widely distributed as the city's fibre optic grid expands (Mark 2010; Mark & Mann 2013; Okuttah 2014), primarily throughout more affluent neighbourhoods and the city's financial centres. Mobile phone technology, generally celebrated for its positive and empowering effect throughout Africa (cf. Castells et al. 2007; Bruijn, Nyamnjoh & Brinkman 2009; Ekine 2010), has been described by former Development Manager for Google Kenya, Isis Nyong'o, as having had "about the same effect as a democratic change of leadership" (quoted in Mason 2007). While this growing sector has resulting in significant research attention being paid to Kenyan media, much of this research has been focused on the country's news media infrastructure, from the political role of newspapers (cf. Loughran 2010; Mudhai 2011) to radio and television (cf. Odhiambo 2002; Ogola 2011; Amutabi 2013), and more recently, on the transformative social and economic role of digital media (cf. Goldstein & Rotich 2008; Njenga 2013; Wyche, Schoenebeck & Forte 2013; Simon et al 2014). Conversely, relatively little has been written on Kenya's various film industries, many of which are located in and around Nairobi.

Much like the Kenyan printing press, the first of which was set up by Christian missionaries in 1890s (Amutabi 2013), the earliest examples of filmmaking in Kenya can be traced to the colonial British 'Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment' of 1935.[6] These films – as social historian Maurice Amutabi notes of colonial media in general – were paternalistic tools for "perpetrating settler ideas" that "excluded indigenous African voices" (2013: 14). This remained the case for much of the century, for while the gradual transition of Kenya into an independent state was matched by an emergence of Swahili and local vernacular language publications and eventually radio broadcasts, due largely to its prohibitive cost, the same was not true for film production. With a few notable exceptions, including the first fully Swahili-language film *Mlevi* (1968), and Sao Gamba's exploration of race in *Kolormask* (1981), it was not until the availability of relatively affordable digital film equipment in the early 1990s that both independent and industrial Kenyan film production started to emerge in force (Barasa 2010).

While the contemporary environment of audiovisual production in Nairobi might owe little to the colonial roots of the medium, much scholarship on Kenyan film today is nevertheless particularly preoccupied with the emancipatory and empowering role of cinema within the country's post-colonial context. Rachael Diang'a's (2011) short monograph on the representations of race and gender in Kenyan films offers an analysis of four films as an exploration of cinema's key role in negotiating power in post-colonial Kenya. Kenyan film scholar Wanjiku Mukora (2003) finds in Kenyan film from the early 1990s a refection of the tension between traditional Kenyan (or Kikuyu) values, and the draws of modern life, and a valuable exposition of the conflicts that characterise post-colonial Kenyan life. In a related critical vein, the recent scholarship of Anne Overbergh (2013; 2015) turns our attention to the role of Sheng[7] and subcultural youth identity in audiovisual film production in the city, in studies that unpack the ways that urban youth culture has harnessed film as a medium for social and political expression. Where much of the scholarship on news media and

[6] The Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment was organised by the colonial British government in coordination an international Christian missionary organisation, producing 35 educational films between 1935 and 1937, in which British officials instructed indigenous East Africans on topics such as agriculture and sanitation (cf. Notcutt & Latham 1937).

[7] Sheng is a Swahili-based cant language that emerged amongst bus drivers in Nairobi in the 1970s. (cf. Githiora 2002; Kang'ethe 2004; Githini 2006)

journalism in Kenya, as well as that on digital and social media, has raised the issue of the "normative roles" (Ogola 2013: 78) of these media in documenting social and political reality, scholarship on film and audiovisual media has taken up a different set of interests. Instead of focusing on questions of freedom of the press,[8] scholarship on film has turned to ask questions about cultural and linguistic identity (Fuglesang 1994; Overbergh 2013, 2015), visual aesthetics (Mukora 2003), and the political need to empower 'authentic' Kenyan voices (Edwards 2008; Diang'a 2011).

While earlier examples are certainly available, Anne Mungai's *Saikati* (1992) and Wanjiru Kinyanjui's *The Battle of the Sacred Tree* (1994) might serve as a useful starting point for a history of the contemporary reclamation of film as a viable and widespread form of cultural exchange amongst Kenyans. However, even while the vastly successful industries for video-film production were starting to emerge in Nigeria and Ghana (cf. Haynes 2010; Krings & Okome 2013; Garritano 2013), throughout the 1990s Kenyan film struggled to gain a significant foothold. It was not until Judy Kibinge's *Dangerous Affair* (2002), which managed to secure distribution through local cinemas, and even establish a presence within Nairobi's VCD piracy networks, that Kenyan film production started to emerge as a viable sector. While government support of film in Kenya may have been sorely lacking (Diang'a 2011: 9), with the formation of the Kenyan Film Commission in 2005 as the government's new agency for the support of Kenyan filmmaking, and an increase in international interest in promoting African film more generally, production started to steadily increase. Throughout the early 2000s, this growth was most noticeable within the low-budget vernacular film sector, which profited from the increasing affordability of digital film technology and non-linear video editing software (Barasa 2010). The most successful of these vernacular industries is the small-scale Kikuyu industry that runs out of offices running the length of downtown Nairobi's River Road, affectionately known as 'Riverwood'. While the majority of Riverwood productions are short slapstick Kikuyu comedies with production budgets of anywhere between US$500 and US$2000, and incomparable to

[8] The freedom of the press and the documentarian power of news media became the particular interest of social media scholarship on Kenya's civil unrest in 2008, during which a television and radio blackout led to the creation of the digital crowd-sourced crisis mapping project Ushahidi (cf. Meier & Brodock 2008; Mäkinen & Kuira 2008; Okolloh 2009).

cinema distributed feature films of Kibinge or Mungai, Riverwood has nevertheless been a vital staging post for empowering filmmakers within the city. Riverwood producers such as Robbie Bresson and Mburu Kimani have successfully used the industry as a launching platform for broader reaching careers, leaving the purely vernacular market behind in search of larger audiences within the Swahili/English language market. A cooperative of Riverwood filmmakers, known as Third Force, has also been instrumental in lobbying and petitioning the Kenyan government for better support and funding.

When I first interviewed Riverwood producers in 2010, there was a sense of both excitement and frustration amongst Kikuyu filmmakers. They were producing more films than ever before, but a lack of government support and the limits of a single vernacular audience were stifling growth. As distributor and producer Simon Nduti commented to me, "the Kenyan government does not recognise the movie industry in Kenya … Because when you recognise something exists, you take care of it" (*personal communication*, May 2010). Nduti was in the process of wrapping up his distribution business at the time, and had already started to import Swahili films from Tanzania in order to supply a Kenyan audience keen to watch films in Swahili. While Riverwood produced films for a dependable yet limited Kikuyu market, Kenyan filmmakers were still struggling to produce Swahili language films of sufficient audiovisual quality for cinematic distribution. One key example of this struggle is Jitu Films, a small production company that focused on creating low-budget Swahili films for distribution in local supermarkets. Failing to balance budget and quality with the expectations of Swahili consumers familiar with high quality North American and Nigerian productions, Jitu Films was shut down in late 2011.

Interestingly, those Swahili/English films that were able to attract larger production budgets and target general cinematic release could do so only by having their funding primarily supplemented by the non-profit sector. Hot Sun Film's *Togetherness Supreme* (2010), a film set in Kibera slum about the 2008 election crisis that attracted some international attention but had limited local distribution, was part-funded by international non-profit Cinereach, and facilitated through the Kibera-based media NGO, the Hot Sun Foundation.

Kamau Wa Ndung'u and Nick Reding's *Ndoto za Elibidi* (2010), a comedic drama about a family overcoming the stigma of AIDs, was funded and produced through the community theatre NGO Sponsored Arts for Education (S.A.F.E.). The film's playful theatrical style made it popular locally, although it saw limited international distribution. In 2010, the overall sense from the filmmakers that I was meeting across various parts of Kenya's film sector was one of tentative optimism at the promises of a new industry, and frustration at the general lack of funding, and government support, for telling Kenyan stories.

When I returned to follow-up this research between 2012 and 2013, the situation had advanced considerably. One Fine Day Films, a film training project that offers practical filmmaking experience to young Kenyan professionals by placing them on actual film productions, had just released *Nairobi Half Life* (2012), which was well received at international film festivals, and was also widely distributed – and pirated – locally.[9] Similar to the projects of S.A.F.E. and Hot Sun, One Fine Day Films had successfully harnessed non-profit development funding for a film production, while creating a film that was both popular and attracted international acclaim. Their following production, Judy Kibinge's *Something Necessary* (2013), was similarly successful, especially locally, and secured screenings across many of Nairobi's major cinemas. Building on these successes, there is an emerging sense in the city that a viable market for Swahili-language productions existed to be exploited, albeit one largely supplemented by non-profit development funding. Increasingly, Riverwood producers have been seeking to transition into the Swahili language market, and supplementing their funding requirements by taking on issue-based NGO-productions. Similarly Sheng-language producers, whose work targets "age- and lifestyle-related audience groups" (Overbergh 2013: 212) within urban Nairobi, have turned to supplement their video-making income by selling their technical skills to the private and development sector, as explored in Ann Overbergh's interesting accounts of the work of Donald Akech, and the transmedia project Shujaazz (2015: 39-44).

[9] The One Fine Day Films training initiative is supported by the German-based DW Akademie, a media capacity building cooperation development group, and British-funded Nairobi-based organisation Ginger Ink Films.

The UNESCO-facilitated 2009 report 'The Eastern Africa Independent Television and Audiovisual Media Practitioners Plan of Action' (or "Nairobi Declaration") optimistically outlines a similar shift within the focus of the Kenyan audiovisual sector, from small-scale and informal production towards an increased formalisation of production at the levels of government policy, promoting Nairobi as the centre of an emerging, seemingly coherent pan-East African industry ("Nairobi Declaration" 2009). However, while the Nairobi Declaration might celebrate the emergence of Kenyan film production, and certainly there has been much to celebrate over the past few years, it remains highly optimistic in its suggestions for institutional support. The Nairobi audiovisual media environment is one marked by a vital hustle for funding and distribution. Vernacular and Sheng filmmakers struggle for self-determination with tight budgets and small audiences, while the budgetary requirements of cinema-quality productions are met neither by the private sector nor government subsidy. On both occasions, the economic needs of the film industry today remain largely – and problematically – supplemented by development funding.

A City 'Under' Development

Having established a sense of the site of research that concerns this thesis – by which we mean not simply the location of a field of research, but the politics of its 'locatedness'[10] as a framework within which research is done – a question that remains is how to constitute the object of this thesis's study within this context. One of the ideas being considered here is the notion that, however dynamic and conflictual, Nairobi is a city predominated by the strong narratives of economic and social development programmes, and that this predomination has a powerful grip on media production in the city. As one possible exploration of this notion, an idea of the 'culturalisation' of development has been introduced as a way of thinking about how development organisations seek to 'do cultural work' as a supposedly efficacious avenue for their programmes of economic and social

[10] Philosopher Clive Cazeaux (2008) explores this term in his paper "Locatedness and the Objectivity of Interpretation in Practice-based Research", in which – writing in particular about practice-based research in conceptual art – he argues that concepts and sensory experiences can be 'located' within wider theoretical and intellectual debates, and in this way constitute an 'objectivity of interpretation'; a field of interpretations anchored by shared "wider, historical or philosophical debates" 2006: 7). His argument promotes the notion that the phenomena of one's experiences "do not belong to you; rather … you occur within them" (2008: 6).

change. In order to expand further on this definition, and refine the contours of how this object of study are to be situated and what kinds of questions we might ask of it, two initial steps must be made.

First, taking a point of departure from what Aram Ziai (2004) identifies as the 'sceptical' branch of post-development theory introduced in the late 1980s, I will offer a working understanding of 'development' theorised as a situated mediated discourse that allows us to think beyond the static binaries of 'North' and 'South', 'East' and 'West', Africa and Europe. Leading from this, I will then present a brief review of literature that has sought to engage with the nexus between media technology and international development – literature which, in its interest in the efficaciousness of new technology, often perpetuates occidental mythologies of the 'developed' and the 'developing'. Encouraged by an understanding of development as a discourse, I promote a focus on the 'culturalisation' of development as one possible way of challenging and advancing current thinking about relations between media and development. By turning our attention away from technologically deterministic narratives of 'media *for* development', we might begin instead to interrogate the variety of practices through which development actors articulate 'culture' within particular discursive frameworks. By presenting the object of study of this thesis in this way, the hope here is therefore not to simply define the terminology central to its argument, but to also define the epistemological and political contours of the current critical approach to Nairobi's media environment.

The Difficulty of Speaking 'in General' about Development

If, along with critical scholars like Robinson, Granqvist, and Simone, we approach the relation between urbanity and modernity with a certain scepticism, we invite an unpacking of 'occidental modernity' and its shallow readings of urban life in Nairobi. However such accounts must still address the fact that many people working across cultural, political and economic fields in Nairobi work with and disseminate superannuated notions of 'the development of Africa'. The relative security and lack of civil conflict in the Nairobi area has made the city a "safe haven in the region for most international, governmental, and non-

governmental organisations" (Bocquier et al. 2009: 1), and the city hosts a wide range of aid-related groups and offices for large-scale international development organisations. A vast United Nations compound in Gigiri, established in 1996 as one of the four largest UN office sites in the world, houses the global headquarters for UN-Habitat and UN Environment Programme (UNEP), as well as offices for a variety of other UN departments, including the cultural organisation UNESCO and the humanitarian news agency IRIN. Along with this UN administrative presence, there is a dense distribution of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)[11] throughout the city, giving rise to what Bowman and Brunner call the city's "humanitarian communities" (2009). In 2010, over 6000 individual NGOs were registered as operating across Kenya (Ekirapa, Mgomella & Kyobutungi 2012: 405). Nairobi has featured prominently in statistical reports on the global proliferation of CSOs (Simon 1995; Glasius & Kaldor 2002). In his argument of a city-centric perspective on the 'global networks' of NGOs, Peter Taylor (2004) goes so far as to argue that Nairobi tops a global list of "NGO connectivity cities", acting as a "leading inter-tropical African world city" (2004: 272) and central hub for connection within an international civil society network. More than just a city of dramatic physical and technological expansion, Nairobi is today a city itself actively 'under' development, a locus for the activities, communities, and conversations of a wide range of different 'development' actors.

Yet how do we constitute this development – and the activities of its actors – as part of an object of academic study? There remains a significant complication in the use of language – both within anglophone academia, as well as amongst media practitioners in Nairobi – around what this 'development' is and what role it plays in social and political life. Traditional historical narratives trace the roots of the 'international development programme' to post-Second World War Euro-American efforts to construct an 'international system' drawn around programmes for economic reconstruction and modernisation from the late 1940s (Sachs 2010: xv-xvi), often taking US-President Harry Truman's '4 Point Speech' of 10 January 1949 as the major signpost of things to come (Naz 2006: 72-73).

[11] In everyday parlance, 'Civil Society Organisation' is often applied as an umbrella term for non-governmental (NGO), inter-governmental (often in the form of inter-embassy cooperation), and Community-Based Organisations (CBO), irrespective of their status of operating at national and international levels, who belong to the broad spectrum of 'aid' and 'development'.

'Development' defined in this sense is seen to signify the supposed economic, political, cultural and technological progression of a particular 'subjectivity' towards a pre-defined 'modernity'. In other words, 'development' indicates the practical facilitation of the creation of a more developed subject, whether that subject be a person, or a national economy. This idealised historical vision of international development, as anthropologist Arturo Escobar critiques it in *Encountering Development* (1995), maintains that a total structural reorganisation of 'developing' countries will achieve "high levels of industrialization and urbanization, technicalization of agriculture, rapid growth of material production and living standards, and the widespread adoption of modern education and cultural values" (Escobar 1995: 4). Yet, as Escobar's work goes on to question, whose modernity is it that such a development seeks to propagate, and what are its attendant political consequences? Majid Rahnema, an Iranian diplomat to the UN between 1957 and 1971 who became a significant critic of the international development apparatus, frames this question by seeing development as "one of those corrupted or 'amaeba' words ... that have come to blur our perception of present realities" (1986: 37):

> For the majority of 'field workers' involved in various development activities, development is identified with a host of programmes aimed at alleviating malnutrition, disease, ignorance, indigence, socio-economic inequality … The concept of development, as it has now emerged as a social construct, corresponds however to something quite different. It has a history. It represents an ideology.
>
> Rahnema 1986: 37

Rahnema's argument points out an important challenge in thinking about present day development: the need to reconcile the 'social construct' of a 'development programme' – something Rahnema rejects for being a "deceitful, manipulative, modern form a colonialism" (1986: 43) – with the wide variety of ways that 'development' has come to be practiced throughout the world. As a term, development here is seen to simultaneously and problematically signify both the actual aspirations and imaginaries of 'field workers', as well as the range of institutional and ideological processes through which international development programmes are officiated. Development, on such an account, is not simply something that people participate in. Rather, it is something that is done to people, and bears the signs of subversive power and control.

The critiques of development advanced by Rahnema and Escobar belong to a broader body of theoretical work that I will refer to, drawing on the useful distinction put forth by Aram Ziai (2004), as 'neopopulist post-development', which Ziai distinguishes from 'sceptical post-development'. This theoretical moment of neopopulist post-development treats development as a discourse organised around Eurocentric and imperialistic values and interests, and seeks the systematic rejection of an 'international development programme'. Where other branches of development theory have, in reviewing the various failures of international development to bring about beneficial change, promoted a range of 'development alternatives' – engagements with ideas such as sustainability, community participation, or economic decentralisation and micro-finance – post-development theory is generally considered to advocate for "alternatives *to* development" (Ziai 2004: 1045; my emphasis). Given this paradigmatic rejection of development in its entirety, writing associated with neopopulist post-development – in particular, Arturo Escobar's critiques of USAID in Latin America (1995), Wolfgang Sachs's edited volume on the 'western invention' of development (2010, original 1992), Gustavo Esteva's work on the "malignant myth" of development (1985), and Majid Rahnema's work on the language of development and poverty (1986, 1991, 1997) – has generally found the counter-weight of development to be nestled in local, grassroots social movements. By identifying development as a "eurocentric discourse" (Ziai 2004: 1046), post-development has in this way attempted to advance what Rahnema calls a "subversive … radical" (1997: x) critique of development which relied on the valorisation of premodern forms of situated knowledge of social and political reality.

While gaining some popularity and influence through the 1980s and 1990s, the post-development moment gradually faded from attention within development theory, confronted by a broad range of criticisms that generally focused on the sub-field's overly zealous rejection of development, and its failure to promote any actionable alternatives (cf. Pieterse 1996, 2000; Simon 1997; Storey 2000). As was regularly noted by its critics, post-development seemed to approximate something closer to *anti*-development than a serious appropriation of the radical epistemological and political critiques of the *post*-structuralism from which it drew (Simon 1997; Pieterse 2000; Ziai 2004). Shared amongst many of these

criticisms is a recognition of the irony at play in the fact that post-development theorists, drawing on the work of Michel Foucault, often seek to present development as a 'discourse', while at the same time construct a monolithic concept of 'development' against which to articulate their critique. As Ziai points out, post-development theorists therefore "remain captured within a traditional objectivist critique of ideology" (2004: 1047) that is distinctly un-Foucauldian. We can see this objectivist position at work in Rahnema's treatment of the 'amaeba-like' quality of the word 'development' as an obfuscation of "present realities"(1986: 37). This privileging of a concealed 'reality' or 'truth' – the truth that development is in fact an imperialistic and manipulative occidental ideology – results in the critique of development not as a discourse, but as a static set of political relationships which refuses to see the *meanings* of development as themselves discursively constituted. At its best, such an approach blinkers itself to the "heterogeneity of 40 years of development theory and policy" (Ziai 2004: 1047), closing itself down to the wide range of practices, locations, and positionalities by which development is composed. At its worst, it seeks to camouflage polemical propositions by galvanising them in the language of radical critique.

This heterogeneity of development – and the wide variety of ways that different projects and activities are organised under the labels of 'aid' or 'humanitarianism' or 'development', and so forth – poses a central challenge for any scholar hoping to contribute to a critique of development. Writing about development's broader global features, researchers have been quick to comment on how the contemporary globalised form of the international system has taken on a complex and "variable geometry" (Pieterse 1996: 558). David Booth's identification of development's 'impasse' in the early 1980s (1985), and Stefan Andreasson's continuation of a similar theme in an Africa-specific context (2010), signal the failures of an international development programme to effectively encapsulate the broad gamut of changes that have been gripping the world, such as "the growing economic diversity of countries within the Third World; increasing concern with the need for environmental sustainability; and the increasing assertiveness of voices 'from below'" (Simon 1997: 183). With similar sentiment Wolfgang Sachs, reflecting on his

influential critique advanced through the 1992 edited volume *The Development Dictionary* (2010, original 1992), notes how his earlier 'post-developmental' work had underestimated the hegemonizing dynamics of the 'idea of development', commenting that while it "certainly was an invention of the West … the South has emerged as the staunchest defender of development" (2009 Preface, in Sachs 2010: viii). As globalisation scholar Nederveen Pieterse puts it, "from the outset development thinking has been marked by an uneven and contradictory patchwork with divergent paradigms operating in different sectors" (1996: 548). More than a simple drifting between the 'ideals' of international development and the various ways that it has been practised, there has also been a significant decentering of the historical idea of development itself.

This multiplicity of meanings and manifestations of development is however not at the exclusion of the political sentiments which post-development sought to underline. Critiquing the discursive dimensions of colonialism, philosopher V. Y. Mudimbe writes of its "reduction of differences into a Western historiography" (1988: 22); might contemporary development discourse not be seen to similarly reduce the contingencies and varieties of Africa and African life into the single, overwhelming story of its need for development? As public policy scholar Warigia Bowman argues, the roots of the developmental vision of a Kenyan modernity can be placed in the policies of colonial British administration (2010: 90), and seen to permeate throughout the recent history of Kenyan governance, from independence in 1962 to the establishment of a multi-party state in 1991 (2010: 91-92). Kenyan scholar Maurice Amutabi (2006), through his in-depth study of the Rockefeller Foundation, goes further in suggesting that this colonial heritage has never been fully shed. Contributing the term 'philanthrocacy' to describe how "NGO structures of operation such as the decision making process ... has been thought to be bottom-up but which in fact is top down" (2006: 201), Amutabi offers an analysis which imagines the institution of the Kenyan NGO as part of a complex continuation of foreign political manipulation. Amutabi's more specific study starts to reveal some of the political relations that permeate situated development processes, presenting an impression of how local Kenyan or 'beneficiary' communities continue to be disarticulated within development programmes.

However, there remains a recalcitrant suspicion that 'the West' is no longer a sufficient mythology for understanding contemporary centres of power. While Amutabi offers a valuable insight, many other development projects – especially projects operating on a smaller scale than the Rockefeller Foundation – are set up and run by Kenyans, or by other Africans, by religious 'cattomarxists'[12] or political activists, local artists, and by Kenyan politicians. After more than a century of one form of 'development' or another in Kenya, elements of development discourse have been localised, assimilated within situated understandings and contexts of knowledge. To what extent has development been re-constituted within these new frameworks of meaning? While critical attention has been paid to the apparent irrelevance of the local lives and realities of beneficiaries to the funding priorities of donors, very little sustained critical attention has been paid to how supposed beneficiary communities *use* the funding that flows through governments and NGOs, and engage, assimilate, reproduce, rewrite, or ignore narratives about modernity, about poverty, about wealth. When studied not for its general ideological connotations and steeped historical resonances, but for its more located genealogical features and situated discursive practices, the critique of development might cease to be the critique of a definition of development, and rather turn to study instead the various ways that ideas about development are articulated amongst the broader social, economic and political discourses that demarcate everyday life. This approach dislocates development from questions about *what it is*, and locates instead the critique of development in questions about how, and under what circumstances, people 'do development'. What are development's constitutive practices and what do they articulate?

It would seem that any clear analytical definition of development does more to elucidate the political and epistemological investments of those that *define* it, than it helps us with a way of engaging with the 'thing' of development in itself. I have sought here to put forward an understanding of development as a discourse, while liberating this notion from criticisms of post-development by not defining it as a uniquely European discourse, but one whose

[12] 'Cattomarxism' is an Italian neologism, often used ironically or dismissively, to describe Italian Catholic aid workers who, uncomfortable sharing their religious interests publicly, do aid work in the name of socialist/Marxist political interests.

boundaries and points of antagonism are more carefully situated. What we mean when we speak of ‘development’ seems to be less an object than a set of discursive relations through which various forms of power, subservience, and disarticulation are exercised. I will now attempt to present a working understanding of the ‘culturalisation' of development within this context. First however, it serves to present a brief overview of literature that has sought to interconnect media studies and development, and within which the present definition of ‘culturalisation’ seeks to propose some advancement.

Relating Media and Development

Contemporary research at the intersection of media communications, and programmes for both international and local economic and social development, might – to continue the trajectory of the critique advanced so far – be usefully thought of as very broadly falling into two strands. The first of these strands marks that research which place media and communication technologies *within* the context ‘international development’, as more or less part of a programme for advancing impressions of development’s global heterogeneity and nuance without interrupting its logic or consistency. The broad interest of this branch of research is the study of how development has appropriated and instrumentalised different communication technologies. As such, it can be generally categorised by its intellectual investment in an ‘idea of development', within which different media technologies are positioned as subservient.

The second strand, in a very different sense, can be thought of as that research which approaches development discourse from within a broader spectrum of social, economic and political enquiries found in media and cultural studies. Liberated from a default advocation of development, this second strand instead radically blurs the line between ‘media and development’ and research into other overlapping areas of critical media enquiry, from social activism, global civil society, critical modernity and urban studies, ethics, internet freedom, and so forth. This liberated arrangement of media and development also allows broader critiques of the role that mass media take in establishing

authoritative and powerful articulations of what development is, helping to de-naturalise unequal and patronising relations between affluent ‘developed' and the impoverished ‘developing’ worlds. Such a position therefore opens the enquiries of ‘media and development’ to critiques of what Mudimbe has called the “invention of Africa” (1988). This move resonates with John Fiske’s work on news journalism, in which Fiske points out that Western journalistic representations of the ‘developing world’ as a place of disaster and famine are “not seen as disrupting *their* social norms, but as confirming ours” (1987: 285). In refusing to think about media as simply those tools “harnessed to the task of ‘putting the message across’” (Hobart 1999: 2), such an approach might therefore be thought of as promoting ‘alternatives to development’ (in a markedly different sense than the absolutist rejection of neopopulist post-development), in so far as it refuses to reduce development into a set of static relationships, and instead treats development discourse as part of other corresponding, overlapping, and interweaving conversations of which we, as of yet, have no full account.

Problematically for any scholar faced with the task of tracing out a radical critical trajectory for a study of media in the context of development, the majority of existing scholarship explicitly concerned with media and development falls within the first, instrumentalist of these traditions. The earliest anglophone scholarship to open an argument for a causal relationship between media communication and programmes of development is often traced to the 1950s and 1960s, coincidental to the rise of communication studies in north America. Championed by scholars Daniel Lerner (1958), Robert Schramm (1964) and Henry T. Ingle’s later work on education (1986), this body of work, often referred to as ‘development communication’, celebrated the contemporary emergence of the mass communications technologies of radio and television, and theorised the developmental power of this media for educating ‘traditional’ societies. In Lerner’s early work, *The Passing of Traditional Society* (1958), communication is presented as a useful tool for promoting certain political and cultural norms in rural communities. Focusing specifically on the Middle East, Lerner works through a series of interventions in which he praises communication technologies for their capacity to drive democratisation and political engagement in what he

sees as politically 'detached' populations. The relationship Lerner imagines between communication and development is therefore a fairly simple one: media, conceptualised narrowly as 'mass media' and positivistically as equatable to 'the technologies of communication', offer opportunities for the promotion of an American political modernity, through increasing the political education and accordingly the democratic participation of large populations. For Lerner, neither technologies for communication, nor the 'modernity' which he promotes, are particularly problematic.

Such an orientation to media and development necessarily privileges an understanding of media as a set of tools that demonstrate an inherent capacity to 'empower', often through offering either education or 'voice' to disarticulated and disenfranchised populations. Lerner and Schramm's work belongs to a particularly traditionalist branch of the broader structuralist concerns of communication studies, a full account of which rests beyond the critical interests of this thesis. However it is worth nothing that this early work from Lerner and Schramm initiated a field of sociological study of communication in development concerned with refining models for effectively communicating social and political change.[13] While this focus on media 'effects' has remained a surprisingly resilient feature of much media and development literature, an important critique of Lerner and his contemporaries from within media sociology has taken issue with their reliance upon a definition of modernity so strongly associated to the post-War North American political discourse of their time. In response communication scholars, keeping step with similar shifts amongst more progressive voices in development studies, sought to expand understanding of how communication technologies are used in non-Western contexts for the propagation of more global and seemingly universal ideas of development as that broad direction of change focused on a 'common human good' (cf. Bob et al. 2008). As Thomas McPhail writes in his concluding remarks to his edited volume *Communication Development: reframing the role of the media*, such an analysis is the study of "how, where, and why media of all types may be utilised or applied for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Third World" (2009: 15). Economic categories such as the 'Third World', assumed ethical notions of 'human benefit',

[13] See Peter Nwosu (1995) for a fairly comprehensive overview of these arguments.

and a focus on the elevation of human suffering – terms which, as post-development scholars have endeavoured to point out, are still capable of being distinctly Eurocentric in their discursive and historical orientations – became the new humanist language uniting a scholarship on communication *for* development.

A broad but revealing example of this approach is the ICT4D[14] movement, which has imagined the internet and social media as new frontiers in the fight for social and political equality. Importantly, ICT4D narratives have not shied away from the complexity of ICTs in this capacity, often developing nuanced and situated accounts of ICTs as useful tools for wide ranging development programmes. Martin Hilbert's work on Latin America (2002, 2012) and Sumit Roy's work on Africa and South Asia (2005) both testify to a diversification of this branch of research largely incommensurate with the earlier works of North American development communication. In its most basic design, this body of work has included studies of the use of radio, internet and television for disseminating information. In its more subtle form, ICT4D has also opened questions of interactivity, interconnection and dialogue, using digital technology to empower, amongst many things, popular involvement in political process, citizen journalism, as well as political and ecological activism. However, the key presupposition of this orientation of new media in the context of international development is the technologically determinist treatment of media-as-tool. As such, this approach invariably involves a positivist perspective through which the operations of development themselves are rarely offered up for critique. While the ICT4D paradigm celebrates an important broadening of the spectrum of who may 'participate' in development, the conditions for this participation remain largely absent of critique: who may participate, in what activities, on whose terms, and to what ends? These questions starkly contrast with the notion of 'participation' and its naturalised association to 'empowerment'. At its best, ICT4D demands a much more thorough engagement with both what people actually do with new technologies, and in an important inversion, what is done with people *through* these technologies.

[14] ICT4D ('Information and Communications Technology For Development') is a term generally applied to the use of digital media, especially wide-area networked technologies such as the internet and mobile phone connections, to advance the interests and ambitions of humanitarian or development projects.

Despite a variety of approaches, geographical areas of interest, and range of media technologies under question, the majority of scholarship which explicitly links media studies with development theory reinstitute a pervasive instrumentalism. In order to form a critical perspective through which to advance research into media and development that promotes a different arrangement, it therefore becomes necessary to reach beyond the fields of communications for development and development communication, and into other fields of media, cultural and social research and enquiry. For example, the story of the meteoric rise of the mobile phone in Africa (cf. Ekine 2010), the establishment of eParticipation platforms like Ushahidi (cf. Goldstein & Rotich 2008), and recent conversations about rise of participatory film production (cf. White 2003), when seen from a perspective of development, have all been celebrated for their democratising, empowering potential. However, when approached from different perspectives, these moments of mediation tell very different stories, as demonstrated by work such as Horst and Miller's anthropological study of mobile phone use in Jamaica (2005), or Tenhunen's work on ICTs in rural India (2008). These accounts, both of which are situated anthropological studies of the social and political dynamics within which such media operates, add narrative variance to accounts of media technology's role in social, political and economic change. Such approaches might be seen as the searching out the grounds for a kind of 'counterhistory' (Foucault 2003: 70-71)[15] of development, in so far as they open themselves to explorations of those parts of social life that dominant discourses on development might remove from view.

This thesis seeks to build upon, and further contribute to, this emerging field of research into media and development. In order to move beyond instrumentalist treatments of media technology in the context of the study of the development field, I turn instead to pose questions into the ways that media production is practised within Nairobi's contemporary aid and development sector. In doing so, I present an ethnography of two development funded and NGO facilitated media productions. The ethnography of media production,

[15] Foucault presents a concept of counter-history as that act of critical historical research which "reveals that the light—the famous dazzling effect of power—is not something that petrifies, solidifies, and immobilizes the entire social body, and thus keeps it in order; it is in fact a divisive light that illuminates one side of the social body but leaves the other side in shadow or casts it into the darkness" (2003: 70). In this sense, Foucault indicates that the discourse of counter-history takes the form of "a disruptive speech" (2003: 70)

while still a relatively new sub-field in media research, has proven a particularly productive source for new thinking about how the media operate today, especially in the context of journalism (cf. Born 2004; Paterson & Domingo 2008; Batabyal 2012; Chowdhry 2013) and television studies (Caldwell 2008, 2009; King'ara 2010; Mayer 2011). However it remains a relatively under-utilised approach in relation to media research in context of international development. By drawing on media production ethnography as a tool for understanding how media and development operate in contemporary Nairobi, this thesis hopes to present a body of vital new research into the mediation of development in urban African today.

Culturalisation and the Discourse of Development

This problematisation of instrumentalist approaches to media and development, seen from within a framework interested in critiquing the notion that development is an uncomplicated set of Eurocentric ideals, promotes an idea of development as a contended and mediated discourse on social and economic change. While this may not be a radically new position within development theory, and has taken a central role in critiques of development over the past few decades, it nevertheless remains a largely underrepresented and under-explored perspective in studies on media and development. Yet, what specifically does it mean to treat development as a discourse? While neopopulist post-development theorists sought to frame development discursively, as has been noted by many of their critics they in fact put forth a highly static definition of development as a form of modern Western power, while at the same time celebrating the local and 'premodern' as its direct and equally idealistic opposition. While Ziai recognises that much post-development theory saw development "as a discourse in the sense of a historically situated mental and linguistic structure" (2004: 1047), it was a discourse stripped of any changeability or antagonism. It was, in other words, a discourse *without discursivity*. What then do we mean by a 'discourse of development', and how is it any different?

I can hold only a conflictual and contradictory impression of development in my mind. It is heavily informed by my own personal experiences: raised as the son of a lifelong UN

employee; educated in the 'international system' with many of my peers also 'UN-children'; eavesdropping as a child on worldly and sophisticated networking dinner parties in Bangkok and Geneva; a disaffected mother who raged at all the pretension and falseness of professional humanitarians, and a father who made refugees and IDPs[16] his life's work; recurrent encounters with ideas like 'NGO rhetoric' and 'humanitarian filmmaking' amongst struggling filmmakers in Nairobi; guilty evasions of fundraisers standing outside a London tube exit. Beyond an overly personal account, there is also a more general understanding that many of the broad features of social change around the world are happening *because* of development. As critical media theorist Mark Hobart suggests, this understanding partly occurs because we "have had the change endlessly represented to [us] *as* due to development through the mass media" (1999: 2): the media have a continual and central role in the *constitution of* the primacy of 'development' as a source of beneficial change. Such an argument proposes that we access an idea about development only through its *mediation* as an idea. These mediations might often recite several familiar hegemonic positions, the most familiar of which is development's articulation of the West as the home of the developed, representing for the less developed the "image of their own future" (Karl Marx, quoted in Rahnema 1986: 37). However even such seemingly final, singular positions are constituted through ongoing articulatory practices, and are therefore inherently open to antagonism.

One example of this dynamic would be how international media coverage of the 2008 Kenyan 'election crisis' articulated the country's civil unrest almost exclusively in terms of ethnic and tribe-based violence – themselves distinctly non-modern identity formations (we never hear of the tribes of Europe) – placed in juxtaposition with idealised forms of modern liberal democracy. In this context, the local and quite separate articulation of the crisis in terms of Kenyan nationalism might be seen to antagonise this presumption, in so far as it presents a moment which broadly accepted the ethnolinguistic dynamics in Kenya's democratic process, and instead encouraged people to vote for policies and not ethnicities. There emerged a sense, especially in Nairobi in the run-up to the March 2013 election, that

[16] IDPs, or 'Internally Displaced Peoples', are those refugees who had the misfortune of not leaving a country's territorial boundaries, often falling through the gaps of UNHCR's mandates on civilian protection during conflict.

while physical violence was to be abhorred, ethnicity remained a significant part of Kenyan democratic process, with Kikuyu electoral candidate Uhuru Kenyatta's partnership with Kalenjin rival William Ruto broadly represented as a wise strategic maneuverer against their Luo competition in Raila Odinga. While certainly not as well disseminated as international media coverage, this situated discourse of nationalism starts to constitute part of an alternative narrative of Kenyan modernity partly liberated from the entrenched formation of modern democracy as anti-ethnicity. We might also – to go one step further – invert this critique on the supposedly 'developed West' itself by simply recognising the intense tribal dynamics surrounding the 2015 British election, which drew out strong ethnic divisions amongst the northern Scottish and southern English, coupled with the near total political disarticulation of Wales and northern Ireland, not to mention minority races and low-income economic classes, while incumbent political leaders are educated in a small collection of private and elite schools. To adapt the classic formation put forth by John Fiske (1987: 285), perhaps our representations of Africa have less to do with African realities, and more to do with dealing with antagonisms to our own political fantasies.

Such an approach toward thinking of development as a 'discourse' draws from the critical nomenclature elaborated by political theorists Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, advanced in their critique of classical Marxism through which they propose new political schematic for radical social critique:

> We will call articulation any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we will call discourse. The differential positions, insofar as they appear articulated within a discourse, we will call moments. By contrast, we will call element any difference that is not discursively articulated.
>
> Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 105

Here Laclau and Mouffe define the relation between four key terms – *articulation*, *discourse*, *moments*, and *elements* – which between them constitute any given field of relations. In this way, they provide a theoretical basis for thinking *relationally* about social and political formations.[17] On their account, the world might be thought of as filled with

[17] This approach later formed the foundation for what came to be known as the 'Essex School' of critical political discourse analysis.

particular yet diverse 'elements' which, in and of themselves, have no specific or situated meaning – they are differences that are *not* articulated. An articulatory practice then functions to establish relations amongst such elements such that they are given meaning as *moments* within a discourse. Notably, this process is always already happening: we do not walk into a space full of neutral elements and start articulating them.[18] In a vital inversion, this discourse is therefore seen as *constituted by* – rather than *constitutive of* – an articulatory practice, and therefore as both inherently contingent, and open to antagonism from other articulatory practices. The 'totality' of a discourse is therefore neither *a priori* to its articulation as such, nor based upon an essentialised or fixed notion of 'identity' or 'false consciousness' (Laclau 1990: 91);[19] it is ascribed instead to the features of an articulated narrative fantasy. As Laclau summaries in the final words of his short critique of ideology in *The Impossibility of Society*: "Utopia is the essence of any communication and social practice" (1990: 92).

In its most basic function, Laclau therefore signifies in the structured totality of discourse what might more commonly be referred to elsewhere as 'ideology' (Laclau 1990: 91-92), with several key adjustments. Primarily, this theory of discourse explicitly rejects the overdetermined closure in ideology's treatment of social and political relations (1985: 122). Instead discourse is seen to be constituted through an articulatory practice (Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 96), challenged through other antagonistic articulations which indicate the limits – and thus, inherent 'fantasy' or 'utopia' – of one discursive totality by proposing another (1985: 124). Additionally, Laclau's notion of discourse is often presented alongside the statement that for Laclau, *everything* is therefore a discourse. However this statement is somewhat misleading. While we might say, on Laclau's account, that everything within the fields of human knowledge and understanding is *discursively constituted* (1985: 108), this is not the same thing as saying that we can necessarily determine the definite

[18] Although this image of neutral and passive elements waiting to be meaningfully articulated seems strikingly similar to the impression that instrumentalist accounts of ICT4D impart when technology is imagined as providing development's subjects with new tools and platforms with which to articulate themselves, as though such people are not always already articulating anyway; as though their lives had a somehow lessened quality of meaning before the arrival of the social media, or a crowdsourcing platform.

[19] "The notion of false consciousness only makes sense if the identity of the social agent can be fixed. It is only on the basis of recognizing its true identity that we can assert that the consciousness of the subject is 'false'. And this implies, of course, that that identity must be *positive and non-contradictory."* (Laclau 1990: 91)

discourse to which everything therefore belongs. The shift from thinking about ideology to thinking about discourse turns 'the social' into a theatre of linguistic performance through which the meaning of 'structured totalities' (the spectres of an eroded concept of 'ideology') are constituted through *practice*. To return this language to the terrain of development, what is then signalled in the treatment of development *as a discourse* is the recognition that ideas of development are constituted through a distributed and chaotic cluster of articulatory practices vying for the primacy of their version of events, reciting or repositioning discursive elements – such as poverty, modernity, sanitation, urbanity, education, technology, ethnicity, and so forth – within different articulatory relationships with each other.

How, then, do we approach the study of such a dispersed, unfinalised object of enquiry? It is in this sense that I would like to promote the concept of 'culturalisation'. In particular, I would like to propose 'culturalisation' as an initial circumspection of an approach toward development understood as a congeries of "underdetermined and overlapping" (Hobart 1999: 7) articulatory practices. The concept of 'culturalisation' seeks to indicate a general range of development practices that 'use culture' as part of broader programmes of development work; those situations in which the discourse of development is 'culturalised'. The two projects with which this thesis engages in detail – a film production about urban refugees and the organisation of a slum-based film festival – were generally perceived by their funders and producers as ways of using audiovisual media to effect social and political change. Throughout these projects, this articulation of an idea of culture took several forms: the promotion of culture as a human right and important developmental goal; culture as a way of stimulating artistic potential, or a form youth empowerment; culture as the opposite to development. 'Culture' demonstrated a contested, uncertain, and undecided meaning amongst the practices of development. To reiterate an earlier question, hopefully now seen within a clearer mode of critique: in what ways do development projects seek to *use* culture, and what in turn can this tell us about the cultures of development themselves?

This thinking returns us to what Aram Ziai indicated as the project of 'sceptical' post-development, and the potential of radical political critique within post-development theory which Ziai sought to salvage from its more reductive neopopulist tendencies. Here, Ziai proposes a continuation of post-development critique not through the simple advocacy of categories of local knowledge, but rather "as a manifesto of radical democracy in the field of 'development'" (2004: 1057) by which he indicates post-development's important extension of "social conflictuality to the area of development policy and development aid" (2004: 1057). By framing development as a discourse, as opposed to a stable or geo-politically organised ideology, we open ourselves to questions about how development and its concomitants are articulated through practice, and the kinds of relationships that delineate media-related development practice. The radical democratic potential of such an approach is not therefore constructivist or positivistic, but rather a kind of radical democracy drawn out by the foregrounding of difference, conflict and antagonism as themselves *constitutive* of human knowledge. It is then within the stream of this project of sceptical post-development that this thesis's present approach hopes to contribute some useful theoretical and practical exploration.

Strategies for Approaching a Media Environment

In attempting one possible advance on the questions at hand, I will undertake what I call a practice-based approach toward the study of two cases of media production in the context of development: the audiovisual production of EU-funded feature film *Wazi?FM* (2014), and the organisation of the Slum Film Festival event in Nairobi between 2012 and 2013. Crucially, this practice-based approach does not simply set out to position the practices of other people as the object of ethnographic study, but also seeks 'to practise' along with other practitioners: I worked as assistant scriptwriter and assistant to the producer on the production of *Wazi?FM* (2014), and took a place on the 'coordinating committee' of the Slum Film Festival, working to organise the annual film event with both international donors and local facilitators. Importantly this approach is not taken in the hope that by 'practising' we might miraculously evaporate all the complexities and difficulties of ethnographic

distance. Instead, it seeks to accept those differences – my own role as a researcher in producing understanding and articulating knowledge – as part of the messiness of 'overlapping' social and political practices. Rather than hide away from the problems and limitations of critical media research, such an approach seeks to foreground them. This practice-based reflection will be supplemented by semi- and non-structured interviews with key figures throughout the research, as well as by literary and textual analysis as a way to better locate the practices under question within broader frameworks of meaning. Through this triangulation of methods, the intention here is to present a body of material capable of illuminating some aspects of how the 'culturasliation of development' takes place, and what its various practices articulate, in urban Nairobi.

In attempting this approach, this thesis will move through several phases. In Chapter 2, I turn to briefly consider in more detail the practice-based method that underlines this current approach. By thinking through the critical role of ethnography in media studies, I attempt to articulate a notion of 'practice' in relation to the pressing methodological and epistemological concerns of media research. In this way, I hope to highlight some of the critical weak points, as well as potential strengths, of 'practising' in order to better understand the 'practices of others'.

Chapter 3 to Chapter 6 are then occupied with presenting the details of my engagement with two media projects in Nairobi. Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 cover my time working on the European Commission (EC) funded audiovisual production of *Wazi?FM,* a feature length film that sought to study the relationships between Somali and Kenyan communities in Nairobi, in the context of xenophobia and police brutality, and was produced by the Cultural Video Foundation (CVF) and facilitated by the Nairobi office of Italian NGO 'The International Committee for the Development of People' (CISP). Chapter 3 considers the six month period during which I was engaged with CVF as an assistant scriptwriter and later assistant to the producer, working primarily on pre-production negotiations with partner NGOs, and on the scriptwriting (and re-writing) process with Kenyan/British scriptwriter JC Naila. Especially during the scriptwriting phase, this work quickly moved from being

'audiovisual production' at a technical level, to the navigation of three very different production priorities: the donor's expectations and mandated requirements; CVF's hostility toward a perceived 'NGO culture' in filmmaking in Kenya; and Naila's soap-opera-based dramatic style of writing. While I trace out some of the contours of this production discourse and its antagonisms in Chapter 3, Chapter 4 then turns to focus on a moment of profound crisis within this discourse: days before shooting of the film began, Westgate shopping centre was attacked and destroyed by the southern Somali terrorist organisation Al-Shabaab. This attack profoundly shifted the discourse on Somali refugees within the city, and accordingly, the ways that the relevance of *Wazi?FM* was imagined by its producers. This discursive crisis revealed aspects of the production discourse that were not otherwise readily apparent.

Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 then move on to present the second project with which I was engaged, the organisation of the Slum Film Festival (SFF), a project facilitated by two local media NGOs, Slum-TV and the Hot Sun Foundation. My work with the festival was spread out intermittently over seventeen months, during which time I was involved in the implementation of the August 2012 and September 2013 editions of the event. The festival, which involves a week of free outdoor screenings at locations in Kibera and Mathare slums in Nairobi, aims to be a "community-based annual film event featuring stories from, by, and about people living in urban slums" ("About Us", slumfilmfestival.net). Chapter 5 follows the festival's 2012 edition, for which I joined the festival organisation as an outsider and observer, my practical participation generally limited to hoisting of inflatable screens and attending team meetings. Drawing on literature in the emerging field of film festival studies, I turn to consider what kind of event the SFF was, and how we might go about understanding how it operates. Chapter 6 then moves into an account of my continued involvement with the festival's 2013 edition, throughout which my role evolved significantly as I started to undertake fundraising and organisational work, and became a more central part of the project's 'coordinating committee'. Moving beyond thinking of the SFF as a 'film festival' in any analytically distinct sense, I investigate the SFF in terms of the various 'professionalisms' which it articulated amongst its various partners. Professionalism, as a

highly contentious concept in development studies and a relatively naturalised concept amongst media practitioners, provides a useful occasion to problematise and explore the imbrication of media and development discourses. By drawing this thinking across the two years of the festival, in which both the festival and my position as a researcher in relation to the festival underwent dramatic changes, this approach offers some impression of a media project and its articulations of 'culture', 'slums', the value of storytelling through film, and the politics of urban space. It seeks to ask insightful questions about how a Spanish embassy initiated project, working in partnership with local media NGOs, sought to promote and germinate 'film culture' in neighbourhoods often without running water or electricity.

The thesis then concludes in Chapter 7 by reflecting on the overarching theoretical implications of this research, and, returning to my broader critical investment in sceptical post-development, asks certain critical questions of what a post-Marxist critique of development might actually look like. Through a comparative consideration of both projects, and returning to questions of Nairobi's contested and conflictual urbanity, I seek to reflect on what these two particular if limited studies of the 'culturalisation of development' can in fact tell us about questions of media, development and the articulation of cultural difference in Nairobi. The thesis ends with a focus on questions of the epistemological challenges, limitations, and opportunities offered by the practice-based approach that underpins its methodological investment. Before moving into the practice-based studies that sit at the centre of this thesis, I will now turn to provide a fuller account of the methods I have used here, and offer some reflection on what they imply, politically and and philosophically, within the context of critical media research.

Chapter 2

Practice as Object and Method: thoughts toward a critical research approach

This chapter is concerned with an elaboration of some of the issues and limitations of a practice-based approach. This 'approach' will be initially distinguished in terms of two separate features. The first is its treatment of people's practices as an object of study in contemporary media research. Such a treatment of practice has taken a central position in recent scholarship, in particular within a subfield of the anthropology of media (cf. Askew & Wilk 2002; Ginsburg et al. 2002; Bräuchler & Postill 2010), or more generally the proliferation of ethnographic methods within media and cultural studies. The second feature of this approach, in a very different sense, is how 'practising' might itself be treated as a method for undertaking media research. In elaborating what treating practice as a method entails, I will bring together two different considerations. In the first instance, ethnographic studies of media production environments – a field that has been especially effective in research on news journalism and television production (cf. Born 2004; King'ara 2010; Batabyal 2012; Chowdhry 2013) – have foregrounded the role of media practitioners in advancing critical media research. The second consideration is the role that 'action research' has taken in conceptual art research (Cazeaux 2008) and industrial design (Archer 1995), in which there has emerged an insightful, if problematic, idea that researchers should *create* in order to better interpret other creations in art and design. In attempting a very initial linking between these fields, I present some tentative and explorative thoughts on what might be entailed in the critical imbrication of researcher and practitioner within a method for the study of media and development.

Following from these thoughts, and drawing upon Mark Hobart's (2010) observation that any intellectually rigorous account of media practices must extend to include the researcher's own interwoven practices of researching, knowing, theorising, and writing (2010: 56-57), I argue that this thesis's practice-based approach cannot be sufficiently formulated in the exclusive terms of either an object or a method of study. I instead advance an understanding of practices as a *relational 'object' of study* within which my practices as a researcher, as well as a practitioner, are directly implicated with the range of overlapping development-related practices which this present approach seeks to study. Notably, this methodological arrangement is not offered in the hope that it will somehow inoculate me against the various critiques of the ethnographic production of knowledge. That is to say, 'practising' will not be taken here as a simple way of fabricating proximity and dissolving difference. Inversely, a practice-based approach is taken up as a way of *playing to the differences* inherent in all media research; of giving such difference a central position in the contemporary studies and broader theorisations of development to which they hope to contribute. Finally, having established a sense of this research's methodological boundaries, I make a brief account of the two studies at the centre of this thesis, and offer some sense of their methodological contours when framed as 'practice-based approaches'.

While the question of media practices has been largely explored as part of the broader interests of the anthropology of media,[20] it seems pertinent to note here that I have personally never trained as an anthropologist, nor studied within any of its disciplines. My own intellectual background is rooted in literature and continental European philosophy, and later in the critical theory of media and cultural studies. My earlier research interests have led me to consider concepts of modernity in Japanese and Russian literature, the politics of film curation and filmic depictions of cultural memory (McNamara 2011, 2013), and a study of the narratives of East Africa's 'emerging media industries' through an interview-based study of Nairobi's vernacular Riverwood industry. As such, my arrival at questions of 'media practices' comes not from a shift toward the study of media from within anthropology, but is inversely part of the appropriation of ethnographic methods within

[20] See Hobart (2005: 26-28) for some interesting insight on some of the implications of this marriage between the fields of anthropology and media studies.

media studies as an important step away from the scientific positivist roots of the discipline. Following from this, I will now present a brief review of the emergence of what I will call the 'ethnographic moment' of critical media research which has played a central role in theoretical alignments of media studies with practice theory. Following from the various epistemological openings made by this ethnographic moment, I will then turn to consider what Nick Couldry calls the 'practice turn' (2004) in media studies, a more contemporary moment in media research which has entered the discussion from the perspective of sociology, but has subsequently been re-invented in politically radical and critically illuminating ways.

The Ethnographic Moment in Media Studies

Being a researcher in media studies today can feel somewhat schizophrenic. Media studies in its contemporary manifestation appears as a highly heterogenous and synthetic field of study, operating almost as an umbrella term for any study of the media – or particular collections of media 'texts' – within the rubric of a whole range of various disciplines, from anthropology, sociology, computer sciences, development studies, cultural studies, film criticism, political economy, philosophy, and so forth. The schizophrenic object of media research has accordingly ranged, including instrumentalist models for communication (cf. McQuail 1987; Hall 1973), perspectives that expand their definition to include "institutional structures, forms, formats and interfaces for disseminating symbolic content" (Couldry 2012: viii), and more openly still media studies stretched to incorporate the whole gamut of 'mediations' of social, cultural and political human relations (cf. Ginsburg 1995; Askew & Wilk 2002; Ginsburg et al. 2002). Each such arrangement brings with it its own political intentions and epistemological presuppositions, calcifying a sense of what media studies is all about, until the next arrangement comes along and reconfigures everything again. In presenting some thoughts on the methods and objects of media studies, it seems I should first present my own arrangement of its cacophony of questions and contributors.

While a varied field today, media studies as a discipline can – often problematically – locate the root of its anglophone heritage in the North American school of communication studies

of the 1950s and 1960s, typified in the works of Shannon and Weaver (1949), and Wilbur L. Schramm[21] (1949, 1960, 1963). These accounts of the then emerging technologies for unprecedented mass-scale communication through radio and later television were focused on elaborating models for the technological communication of ideas into the minds of (often clearly identified) societies and individuals they targeted. Shannon and Weaver's 'transmission model' (1949), developed as a 'mathematical theory of communication' that imagined communication as a socially and culturally vacuous process comprising the transition, interference, and reception of information. Equipped with logic of the mid-20th century post-industrial economy that emerged during the maturation of American capitalism, this predominantly behaviourist field was broadly concerned with the most efficient and effective models for transferring information to passive recipients, attempting the analysis of 'communication' defined as those "procedures by which one mind may affect another" (Shannon & Weaver, 1949: 3). The linearity of these models, as television audiences scholar Ien Ang puts it, "privilege the position of the Sender as legitimate source and originator of meaning and action, the centre from which both spatial and social/cultural integration is effectuated" (Ang 1996: 138). Furthermore, this position operates with the central presupposition that communications carry messages which hold 'meanings' that could be entirely known, quantified, and objectively analysed. On such account, people are not even seen as 'noise' or interference; they are simply a destination.

This heritage in mid-20th century communications scholarship set the scene in anglophone media studies for an unfortunate "empiricist and positivist track record" (Postill 2010: 2) with which much media scholarship has been struggling ever since. Early models for communication, as Ien Ang critiques, were marked by a shallow interest in the behavioural effects of communication on passive audiences (Ang 1996: 137). Such models demonstrated a general insensitivity to the interpretive capacity of 'Receivers' and the complex political relations implicit in any act of communication (cf. Carey 1989: 15-32). In moving beyond this paradigm, subsequent media research has sought to relocate its object

[21] Schramm was well known for his work in championing the institutionalisation of communication studies across north American universities.

of study away from linear models of communication and society, shifting toward more dynamic accounts of the communicative constitution of society. Two important moments in this shift can be identified as Marshall McLuhan's argument (1964) for closer study of how media technologies operate within complex social settings, and Stuart Hall's influential political reformulation of communication by his introduction of an idea of a complex structure to communication, and a 'discourse' of decoding media texts (1973, 1980). Marshall McLuhan's 1964 work *Understanding Media* posits that, rather than concern itself with the content of communication and the effectuation of its reception, media research should focus on the medium of a communicative act itself. He encapsulates this point in the now familiar maxim 'the medium is the message' (1964). Through the example of a lightbulb, a medium without complex content which nevertheless led to a fundamental reorganisation of social life, McLuhan suggests that the media of communications need to be analysed within the broader sociological context of their use. Critiques of McLuhan's work have rightly taken issue with its technocentric reduction of the complexities of human communication into the simple technology of its medium (cf. Winston 1986; Carey 1989; Williams 1992). Arguably McLuhan's theory of media maintains much of a 'positivism' reminiscent of earlier approaches, in so far as its reduction of content *into* medium essentialises the media into a set of measurable, and ultimately knowable quantities. However McLuhan's basic theoretical relocation of communication technologies into broader social and political frameworks initiated an important move beyond the linearity of early communications scholarship.

In a quite separate move, Stuart Hall's seminal work in critical cultural studies, *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse* (1973; often cited in its edited form *Encoding/ Decoding,* 1980) sought to bring media research beyond its positivistic roots in linear communication theory by introducing a politically charged concept of 'discourse' into a cultural model of communication. This 'discourse' is understood by Hall as the linguistic field of signification in which information is encoded by producers and decoded by receivers under situated and culturally complex conditions. As Hall puts it, giving the example of a 'raw' historical event covered in news journalism, an "event must become a 'story' before it

can become a *communicative event*" (Hall 1980: 130). Within this discursive translation of information into 'story', Hall introduces an idea of 'dominant' or 'preferred' meanings that operate in the acts of encoding, and offers a theorisation of the 'alternative' ways that a message can then be read (decoded) by recipients: negotiated readings, in which the dominant meanings are accepted yet somewhat transformed by situated contexts in which they are decoded, and oppositional readings, in which decoders understand the dominant meanings, but elect to decode them in a "*globally* contrary way" (1980: 139). Hall's work has met with criticism for that fact that, though it may complicate the picture of how communication works, it retains the central epistemological presupposition that 'meanings' are effectively determinate and can be *known.* It remains particularly unclear on Hall's account exactly how we are supposed to *know* what media's preferred meanings in fact are (cf. Hobart 2000). However Hall's critical language, and his fundamental shift away from behaviourist accounts communication, resulted in an important and still fashionable 'turn' within media scholarship that foregrounds the media's role in the consolidation of racial and class-based identities within society.

While very different in approach, Hall and McLuhan both announce a radical shift within media research away from early communications theory by dislocating the linearity of behaviourist models about how people communicate ideas. The recognition of the television, newspaper and radio – and more recently the computer screen and mobile phone – as objects embedded within coextensive social and political fields afforded media scholarship a new imaginary for engaging with the complicated and situated ways that media is integrated within, and indeed *constitutive of*, much of modern life. Through the 1980s and 1990s, several strong strands of media scholarship emerged, including Gramscian-Marxist critiques of hegemony in exploring the media's role in maintaining capitalist class-relations (cf. Chomsky & Herman 1988), strong sociological critiques of mass media such as print and television journalism and their role in contemporary nation-building and national identify formation (cf. Curran & Gurevitch 1991; Ginneken 1998), and more recently the role socially networked digital media has taken in activism and new theories of political resistance (cf. Dahlberg & Siapera eds. 2007; Hands 2011; Dahlgren

2013; Postill 2014). What much of this scholarship has in common is a refusal to treat the relations between media and society as simple or linear. Within this new wave of critical media scholarship, and strongly influenced by anthropological enquiries of everyday life, questions of the local specificity and situated knowledge turned toward considerations of the social and political complexities of production and reception that fell far beyond the purview of scientific communications research. As critical media theorist Mark Hobart puts it, "media scholars invoke anthropology at precisely the point at which scientific approaches to society prove manifestly inadequate" (2005: 26). As suggested in the title of Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod and Larkin's edited volume *Media Worlds: anthropology on new terrain* (2002), this anthropological turn in media studies – and of course, the media turn in anthropology – saw a resurgence in the use of ethnographic methods for the interrogation of the social and political 'media worlds' of others.

As Murphy and Kraidy point out in their review of the contemporary relevance of the ethnographic method, ethnography "fixes its gaze on the practices of everyday life" (Murphy and Kraidy 2003: 4), and it does so by "commitment to immersion, building of trust, long-term observation" and "participation in the daily lives of research participants" (Murphy and Kraidy 2003: 3). Even in the light of the growing significance of the global dynamics of vast media industries, amplified in the context of digital media and its corresponding questions of transnational media relationships and diasporic communities, local and situated knowledge has remained a significant aspect of global media research (Murphy 1999; Murphy & Kraidy 2003; Sreberny, Boyd-Barrett & McKenna 1997; Sreberny 2005, 2008). As media technologies have increasingly allowed rapid communication across large geographical distances, and with distribution channels adapting accordingly, the spatial locatedness of the social, the cultural, and the political has come under critique. In particular, the question of a 'national' media, and the crisis of a 'national identity' in an environment of increasingly *trans*national relationships, has become a central contention in contemporary media research. The theoretical contributions of Benedict Anderson (1991), Arjun Appadurai (1993, 1996, 2013) and Annabelle Sreberny (2005, 2008, 2011), among many others, have worked to open new terrain for thinking

about how the political and economic tectonics of globalisation have complicated the picture of media production and reception across a broad range of historical and cultural contexts. This move beyond the 'national' has been particularly significant in the study of media in sub-Saharan Africa, with film scholar Alexie Tcheuyap (2011) electing to use the term 'postnational' as a signifier of how film production on the African continent is today part of far wider-reaching dynamics, both in its distribution and in how African filmmakers think about their own work. While this transnational moment, with its implied planetary perspective, might risk repeating the synecdochic metaphors of McLuhan's 'global village' and Castell's 'network society', much of this research has in fact sought out the 'global' within the 'local', raising questions about how individuals use, navigate, imagine and mediate their lives in increasingly decentralised ways.

Orienting this Study within the Anthropology of Media

The discipline to which the ethnographic approach in media studies owes much of its methodological maturity and sophistication is the field of anthropology. While traditional anthropology, focused as it was on the non-Western and the local, was slow to assimilate the study of the media within its gamut of interests (Ginsburg et al. 2002: 3), by the 1980s anthropologists had started to recognise media technology as a significant cornerstone of much contemporary human life (Ginsburg et al. 2002: 4-5). While early media and communication studies was still grappling with models for mass communication technologies, anthropology was starting to frame the media more broadly as "communicational media practices, technologies and institutions" (Boyer 2012: 411). As anthropologists Eric Rothenbuhler and Mihai Coman put it, in studying the media, anthropology "turns its attention from 'exotic' to mundane and from 'indigenous' to manufactured culture, but preserves the methodological and conceptual assets of earlier anthropological tradition" (2005: 1). Anthropology, whose great strength is its valorisation of careful, situated, and long-term ethnographic engagement, found a rich new field of research in the study of the complex and rapidly changing media worlds that have been steadily taking root throughout our societies.

The essays included in key early edited volumes in the sub-discipline – see Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod and Larkin's *Media Worlds* (2002), Wilk and Askew's *The Anthropology of Media* (2002), Rothenbuhler and Coman's *Media Anthropology* (2005), and more recently Pink and Abram's insightful volume on the challenges of media anthropology and public engagement (2015) – testify to the diversity and breadth of research that has emerged from the anthropological study of the media. Studies have covered a vast terrain, both geographically and conceptually, from television's role in the formation of national identities in Egypt (Abu-Lughod 2002, 2005) and India (Mankekar 1999, 2002), audience research on radio use in Zambia (Spitulnik 2002), the social and cultural features of mobile phones in Jamaica (Horst & Miller 2005, 2006) and the internet and local governance in Malaysia (Postill 2011). In the specific context of African audiovisual media, Brian Larkin's longterm observations of Nigerian media cultures (1998, 2002, 2008), and in particular the Hausa video-film industry (2004, 2008), have – alongside John McCall's ethnographic engagements with Nigerian video-film (2002, 2004), and anthropology of religion scholar Birgit Meyer's work on spirituality in Ghanian video-films (2005, 2006) – proven an enormously rich resource for the study of African video-film industries. In particular, Larkin's reflections on the piracy networks that underlie Nigerian video-film distribution provide an important intervention in scholarship on the industry (2008: 217-241), bringing to bear a 'materialist' analysis in a field of film scholarship often limited to textual research (cf. Dovey 2015; and see Chapter 3 of this thesis). By turning their attention to the localised processes and practices through which people use various media within their everyday lives, anthropologists have been able, as Heather Horst and Daniel Miller phrase it in the Introduction to their volume on digital anthropology, to reflect "on what it means to be human, the ultimate task of anthropology" (2012: 3). While producing historically and geographically focused analyses, anthropologists have contributed a critical body of research with far-reaching implications for media scholarship more generally.

Given anthropology's primary focus on the everyday lives of specific human communities, it is perhaps understandable that particular attention has been paid within the media anthropology to understanding audiences, users, viewers, and listeners. Such approaches

have offered powerful interruptions of the often linear, reductive and behaviourist treatments of 'receivers' that typify early media and communication studies. This has been well established in the revealing and long-term television audience studies of Ien Ang (1991, 1996), Virginia Nightingale (1996) and John Hartley (1992). In African contexts, similar perspectives have been elaborated in Lila Abu-Lughod's situated accounts of television viewership in Egypt (2002, 2005), and Minou Fuglesang's work on video cultures in coastal East Africa (1994). However a smaller yet no less critical sub-field of anthropological interest – and in relation to which this thesis is directly oriented – has been the ethnographic study of sites for media production. First fully explored in Hortense Powdermaker's 1950s ethnography of Hollywood (1950), the ethnography of media production has since become a rewarding field of research, especially in the study of television and news journalism. Significant scholarship in the field includes, though is by no means limited to, Somnath Batabyal's work on Star News and Star Ananda in New Delhi (2012), Georgina Born's striking in-depth engagement with the BBC (2004), Vicki Mayer's study of television production economy (2011), and Angad Chowdhry's doctoral thesis on the production of fear in Indian newspapers (2013). In one of the only in-depth ethnographic works on Kenyan media production, George Ngugi King'ara's doctoral thesis (2010) undertakes a detailed study of the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation's television production environment, analysing the various ways that Kenyan audiences are imagined and positioned as subjects by television producers in Nairobi. By turning to study the human lives – and practices – that inhabit sites of media production, these production studies use close ethnographic analysis and long-term observation to unravel delicate and interwoven analyses of sites of production, presenting textured accounts that challenge established ideas about how media institutions operate.

In positioning this present thesis in relation to the anthropology of media, I find myself siding with Dominic Boyer's celebration of the field's dynamic and flexible borders, and his rejection of the need for any overpowering 'subdisciplinary identity' within the field (2012). While this thesis does not sit specifically within the anthropological discipline itself, the debt owed to anthropology by any media scholar attempting an ethnography is significant. By

building my research around an ethnography of two media production projects in Nairobi, and by turning explicitly to observe and study 'what it means to be human' in one small corner of a large and complex African city, this thesis hopes to contribute back to the growing field of research that straddles, and slips between, anthropology and media studies. Furthermore, by undertaking an ethnography of media production in the specific context of international development, the intention here is to present original ethnographic research into the production of ideas of development itself. Such work therefore complements the recent efforts of Andrew Skuse, Marie Gillespie and Gerry Power (2011) on the production of drama in the context of development, and offers another voice to a field of scholarship which problematises the grand narratives of social change that emerge when we come face-to-face with the the messy, human worlds of media production.

Toward a Critical Ethnography

The intention here has not been to synthesise any totalised account of media studies, nor distinguish any sort disciplinary canon: as Katz et al. put it, "even without the double "n", canons are explosive" (2002: 1). Instead it has sought to draw out a sense of the personal readings that frame my own impression of the intellectual arrival of an ethnographic moment within the highly heterogenous field of media studies. This ethnographic moment brought with it a significant epistemological shift within the presuppositions of research into media and its relations to society. The 'knowledge' sought out by media studies was no longer seen as reducible to determinate scientific knowledge about what media and society are and how they operate. Instead the knowledge to which ethnographic media research seeks to contribute is knowledge of the various ways that people represent, articulate, and 'mediate' their daily interactions through various media. Yet the question then follows: what exactly does it mean to *participate* in the lives of other people? And what happens when we try to turn 'mediated life' into a coherent object of academic study?

I would like to briefly level two very basic critiques at the method of ethnography, to help specify its particular critical theoretical potential within this current approach toward media research. The first is the simple observation that treating 'specific locations' as situated

sites of research is not the same thing as treating them as sources of *knowledge*. That is to say, if ethnography is to produce a resistance to the ethnocentric closure of preceding ideas about what society is and how it operates – whether this is framed as 'local' interpretations of globalisation, or specific activities of journalists in constructing 'truth' of the news – it cannot be sufficient to simply go elsewhere and comment on what other people are doing. The 'going elsewhere' of ethnography has to be coupled with the researcher critiquing his or her own epistemological presuppositions about why their questions matter and how this importance has been framed, or else risk simply imprinting their own pre-articulated understandings on whatever situations they happen to arrive in. The second critique raises a similar point: when looked at down the long barrel of the history media studies, the ethnographic moment runs the risk an ironic self-critique. In one sense, ethnography can be seen broadly as a response to the failure of scientific approaches to communication to satisfactorily account for all the varieties of ways media is being used in an ever expanding world. As such, ethnography explicitly rejects the communicative neutrality of transferable meanings between senders and receivers, putting all number of complicated obstacles in the way. However, if taken to assume that by simply 'being close to' or 'spending time with' people ethnography can somehow gain a privileged access to knowledge of other people's lives, does such an approach not risk replicating this very same presupposition of the neutral transferability of complex social and cultural meaning – this time from *reality* to *researcher*? Reduced to qualities of geographical decentralisation, immersion, and the building of trust, ethnography could be seen to revert to the same epistemological position from which it seeks escape.

The critical operation of ethnography must in this sense take the act of geographical *re*location, and find in it acts of discursive *dis*location. Critical ethnography is taken therefore not as simply a question of proximity and immersion; these remain important, though not sufficient, qualities. In its critical form ethnography treats sites and subjects of research as sources of *knowledge*, and not simply sources of information and data to be squeezed into pre-established ideas about how the world fits together. Furthermore, it makes central to its account the role of the researcher as a vital mediator of ethnographic

knowledge. This critical character therefore not only seeks to disrupt established ways of thinking about and framing the world, it problematically foregrounds all the *constitutive differences* between the researcher and their field: ability in local language and translation of meanings into models of thought established within other linguistic traditions; the researcher's performance as part of pre-existing gender, racial and class-based identity relations within sites of research; age and associations to ideas about experience or positions of natural superiority or inferiority; ethical assumptions the nature of the 'subaltern'; socioeconomic significance of a particular accent – these become inseparable from the kinds of observations, understandings and knowledge get produced through ethnography.

These reflections share several features with a concept of 'critical ethnography' advanced within the "interpretivist movement" (Anderson 1989: 249) amongst North American sociologists and anthropologists. Essentially interested in working political critique 'back' into ethnographic encounter (Thomas 1993; Carspecken 1996), and in part an attempt to "curb the hubris of academic knowledge production" (Foley 2002: 487) by establishing a 'reflexive' and performative style of ethnographic engagement and writing (Foley 2002; Madison 2005), this 'critical ethnography' sought out "critical theory in action" (Madison 2005: 13). However the fairly dispersed collection of papers and manuscripts that identify this school of 'critical ethnography' pose several problems when placed in the framework of media studies, not least of which is a troubling slippage between an idea of 'political critique' and a researcher's "ethical responsibility" (Madison 2005: 5), and the fact that if taken outside the discourse North American social sciences, it becomes much less clear exactly when ethnography was *not* political and how reflexive ethnography therefore addresses this perceived lack. As such this chapter's following move to engage with the question of 'media practices', theorised in particular relation to the critical concerns of media studies and its 'ethnographic moment', will attempt to lay some groundwork for thinking about critical ethnography within a framework of media research rooted in a post-Marxist language of discourse and its articulatory practices.

Practice as Object

The idea of a practice has so far been expressed here in relation to 'articulatory practices', and more specially as part of a theorisation of development as an articulatory discourse within a radically open field of social and political relations. However what is a practice, and how does it differ from seemingly similar descriptions such as an action, a representation, or a process? As media anthropologist John Postill notes, the term 'practice' has been used across anthropological studies of media with little or no problematisation, often exhibiting troubling semantic slippage between ideas of 'practices', 'processes' or 'formations' (2010: 5). This vague definition of 'media practices' is often treated quite generally "as a lexical means toward ethnographic ends" (Postill 2010: 5). Practice, when uncomplicated and naturalised, signifies all the things that are done by people, in situated reality. Yet if we take 'practice' in this most general sense, treated the basic unit of ethnographic analysis, then what is *not* a practice, and what exactly is a practice-based approach attempting to study? Following on from the body of reflection aggregated in *Theorising Media and Practice* (Bräuchler & Postill 2010) – a volume which usefully operates at various disciplinary intersections within media studies, including the anthropology of media (the general rubric under which the volume is published), sociology, critical theory, linguistics/semiotics, cultural studies and political philosophy – and drawing in particular on the contributions by John Postill, and a critical exchange between Mark Hobart and Nick Couldry, I will present a brief review the current state of the debate on 'practice theory' in media studies, before thinking through some of the critical implications that arise when we make 'practices' our object of study.

Nick Couldry's article "Theorising Media as Practice" (original 2004; references here are from the 2010 republication) is often taken as the first concerted call for a theoretically rigorous account of media practices, although he himself notes that his argument for a 'new paradigm' in media research was broadly anticipated. This was particularly the case in the subfield of audience studies, which had raised important questions about the 'situated practices' of watching and viewing television (2010: 39). Placing his theoretical foundations

firmly in the 'practice turn' in sociology particularly indebted to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' (Bourdieu 1977) and Anthony Giddens' ordering social principles entangled in his notion of 'structuration' (Giddens 1984), Couldry expands on the work of sociologist Ann Swidler (2001) in her theorisation of 'anchored' cultural practices in which she defines practices as "routine activities" imagined as distinct from discursive "systems of meaning" (Swidler 2001: 74-75; cited in Couldry 2010: 41). While Couldry challenges some of the contours of Swidler's account, he nevertheless works on shared theoretical foundations, further exploring an understanding of practices as ordered collections of 'routinised' or 'habitual' human activities. In a move that builds upon Anthony Giddens' theory of 'structuration' (1984), Couldry elaborates a definition of what he calls 'media-oriented' practices as the routinised activities of individuals while they interact with particular types of media. Through their actions, people are seen as contributing to the ordering of social relations, placing the study of media "firmly within a broader sociology of action and knowledge" (2010: 37). This definition allows Couldry to pose questions about how media-oriented practices relate to other parallel social practices, allowing him (following from Swidler) to interrogate the nature of the hierarchy of media-oriented practices, asking why some practices are in effect more practised than others. It is in the persistence of particular practices over others that Couldry then seeks to analytically induce the shapes and structures of the social order that surround activities of media production or reception. On the basis of this ritualised concept of practices, Couldry calls for a 'new paradigm' in media studies – albeit one with striking parallels to McLuhan's medium-as-message proposal (1964) – in which research on media-oriented practices allows us to interrogate the ways that media is used within, and contributes toward maintaining, particular social orders or systems.

Anthropologists John Postill and Birgit Bräuchler open their 2010 edited volume *Theorising Media and Practice* with a reprinting of Couldry's 2004 article, although in his introduction to the volume Postill is quick to note the critical need to move beyond Couldry's sociological framework. While Couldry himself continues his trajectory of enquiry on practice-as-social-ritual in his more recent monograph *Media, Society, World* (2012), within the discordant and

turbulent field of media studies, the strong sociological foundation of his ritualistic approach has been broadly challenged. Primarily, a ritualistic definition of practice can be seen to rely upon the determination of repetitive acts within a social field, and the power of this determination seems to rest primarily with the ethnographer. To what established schematic do we select one practice as ritualistic, while displacing other seemingly 'ordinary' practices from our analysis? A ritualistic definition of practice seems to rely on a synecdochic leap of imagination, in which researched and documented practices are elevated to the status of 'ritual' on the basis of demonstrable regularity. Anthropologist Talal Asad (1993), in his nuanced work on attempting to establish a 'genealogy of ritual', takes us further in this problematisation by suggesting a concept of ritual "as a language by which 'private' things become 'publicly' accessible" (1993: 85), and then interrupts his own analysis with a recognition of the role of prudence – namely, a person's "prudence of committing oneself publicly" (1993: 86). Indeed, if the entire field of practice is to be composed of ritualistic practices, what space does that leave for those practices which, through prudence, people choose not to make public? As Asad demonstrates, defining a ritual is itself a highly problematic task. As Couldry takes ritual practices as a basis for inducing complex structures of situated social and cultural formations, then Asad's simple introduction of prudence has a deep theoretical implication: a society composed of ritual practices is a society with no capacity for privacy, interiority, or silence. Couldry offers in this sense a profoundly positivistic account which at its best captures public schedules of action while silencing the vast contingencies of human life, and at worst creates a situation in which an ethnographer defines the very 'regularity' in which he or she then 'discovers' the structures of society.

Hobart notes a related contention when, quoting philosopher Henry Nelson Goodman, he points out the risk of mistaking "features of discourse for features of the subject of discourse" (Goodman 1972: 24; cited in Hobart 2010: 61). How sure can the researcher be that what he or she researches is in fact a ritual practice at all, and not simply something resembling the contingent discursive features of "slippage, change, openness" (Hobart 2010: 61)? Are my ethnographic observations of regularity evidence of profound social

rituals at play, or are they simple random occurrences, a slippage which caught my attention as a scholar looking for opportunities for "tapping oppressed voices or moments of tactical resistance and articulating them to theory" (Murphy and Kraidy 2003: 4). And fundamentally, how are we to determine either way? And yet if media practices are not to be taken as ritualistic actions, then what are they and how can we speak about them?

Postill introduces *Theorising Media and Practice* with a general definition of practices as those "embodied sets of activities that humans perform with varying degrees of regularity, competence and flair" (2010: 1). As he goes on, "practice theory is a body of work about the work of the body" (2010: 11). Practice in this sense is defined by action and embodied by its human actors. But how do we frame, and make meaningful, such practices? What sort of thing are we talking about when we talk about practice? Working from a perspective of both semiotics and social anthropology, Helle-Valle puts forth a useful starting question: why are we not satisfied with a definition of practice as something that is "good to think with" (2010: 191) and do we really need a more precise definition of the term? In reply, he makes the convincing argument that while practice might usefully point us toward areas of study that are temporally and spatially specific, the "need to uncover some kind of underlying structure is so engrained in us that variants of this idea pop up in various guises again and again" (2010: 192). Responding to this, Helle-Valle seeks to carefully characterise a theory of practice that "abstain[s] from evoking *langue*-like explanations of regularity and order" (2010: 206). Helle-Valle's argument centres around his positioning of a Saussurean concept of 'langue' against a Wittgensteinian idea of 'language-game'.
This Saussurean concept of 'langue' Helle-Valle understands as the idea that observable meaning is merely a 'surface phenomenon', beneath which lies a 'reality' that is a "logical, consistent system of meanings" (2010: 192) which determines "the often imperfect expressions that we can hear and see" (2010: 192). Instead, Helle-Valle turns to a Wittgensteinian idea of 'language-games', turning our attention to the possibility "not only that meaning lies in use but that meaning *is* use" (2010: 194). In this sense, "to study meaning is to study uses of language within forms of life" (2010: 198). On this basis, Helle-Valle reconstitutes the foundation of media practice theory not in sociological but rather

philosophically sceptical terms. As such, he presents an understanding of practices as embedded within specific communicative-practical frameworks, in which people – seen as changeable 'dividuals' rather than consistent individuals – are constantly mediating and remediating their relations to each other, as well as to larger social/environmental dynamics.

There is a sense in Helle-Valle's account of an overarching under appreciation of the variety of ways that resistance to generalisation, linguistic scepticism, and ethnographic approaches have in fact played a central role in contemporary studies of the media. However, confronted by Couldry's sociologically framed call for a new paradigm for media practice research, Helle-Valle's announcement of a need for an ontological critique of langue-like definitions of practice sets an important direction to contemporary critical conversation. Mark Hobart's critical response to Couldry's article usefully draws this conversation forward, toward a new critical terrain for thinking about practice that is similarly liberated from its sociological bedrock. While its theoretical implications are resounding and complex, Hobart's critique of Couldry is in fact quite simple. Couldry's account of practice, Hobart argues, relies on a naturalistic perspective in which practice is a 'natural' object of study. Building upon this, Couldry's account is essentially one of increasing the complexity of this object, of rearranging and 'anchoring' different practices in one another, and of determining their 'media-oriented' description. However in doing so, Hobart points out that Couldry side-steps a whole range of central problems: "does an analysis of practice not apply to the thinking of academics?", "what can we actually know about other people's practices… and what underwrites our knowledge?" (2010: 59). Hobart then goes on to elaborate an exploratory account of practice on two fronts. Firstly, he expands an understanding of 'media practice' to encompass media-related practices – a move which, in reference to Hobart's focus on the social relations of mass media, proposes an epistemological broadening of a definition of practices such that it might allow us to "address the social context in which people engage with, use and argue over or ignore the media" (2010: 69). Secondly, Hobart elaborates a sense in which "[p]ractice is not a natural object but frame of reference that we use to interrogate a complex reality… Practice

therefore depends on it being identified as such" (2010: 62). Here, Hobart therefore conjures a sense of 'the social' which is radically constituted *through*, as well as seen to be *constituent of*, articulatory and framing practices. His 'media-related' practices therefore only "provide an initial circumspection out of the whole range of identifiable practices in a society at any moment" (2010: 67) while also vitally positioning the framing practices of circumspection and identification as themselves central to our thinking.

Hobart's explorative response to Couldry resonates strongly with Laclau's notion of 'articulatory practices' – indeed, Hobart himself frequently refers to Laclau in drawing out a sceptical foundation for advancing practice theory in media studies. To return to Laclau's particular language, these articulatory practices are those practices which establish "a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result" (Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 105). What I take this to mean is that articulatory practices are those practices which give meaning to 'elements' by talking about them, imagining them, positioning them, framing them, and so forth, *in relation* to each other such that this relation changes what these elements *are* and how they are *identified*. Taken in this way, we begin to refine a sense of the distinction of practice in terms of what it *is not*. We might think this through two short examples. In the production of feature film *Wazi?FM*, the study of which occupies Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis, the schedules of audiovisual production cycles – fundraising, organising, pre-production, scriptwriting, casting, shooting, editing, distributing – cannot in themselves be considered 'practices'. They are production phases, but they do not articulate anything in themselves. However within the phase of scriptwriting, to which I dedicated a considerable space for analysis in Chapter 3, a whole range of articulatory practices can be seen to take place – practices of anticipating, imagining, knowing, drafting, arguing, redrafting, and so forth – through which a script for *Wazi?FM* is eventually produced, and which articulate (and therefore transform) concepts such as 'culture', 'creativity', 'drama', 'responsibility', 'human rights', 'humanity'. To adapt the phrasing put forth by Hobart to speak of mass media, in this context we might then speak of 'production-related' practices as an initial circumspection amongst the congeries social practices that spill beyond the routines of 'production phases'. In the case of the Slum Film Festival,

which occupies Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis, we might similarly comment that the *events* of the festival – weeklong outdoor screenings in two informal settlements in Nairobi – were not themselves practices as the events do not articulate anything. However 'event-related' practices of a projectionist in selecting films, interpreting audience opinion, adapting screenings, and so forth articulate ideas of 'entertainment', 'popular opinion', or 'film culture'. Furthermore, in the organisation of the festival's events, various other practices of drafting proposals, establishing film schedules, writing press releases, arguing in meetings, articulate ideas about the the social and cultural identification of 'slums', of the state of Nairobi's 'urbanity', of the role of 'culture' among Nairobi's urban 'slum dwellers', of what make 'important stories', and so forth.

In this way, I will take as 'practice' all those human activities that articulate meaning amongst elements such that their identity transforms as a result – that is to say, practices are those things which constitute (or antagonise) discursive totality. They are therefore thought of as separate from those things or products perceived as containers of discrete meanings: events, representations, processes, functions, rituals, habits. Framing a practice-based approach in this way allows us to start to distinguish 'practices' in such a way that we might begin to actually say something about them, while at the same time avoiding a retreat to 'langue-like' formulations of naive realism. There remains, as Helle-Valle reminds us, "nothing 'behind' practices" (2010: 198).

However, treating practices in this way does not miraculously solve the problem of how a researcher defines a practice, or what meanings a practice might articulate. In a key contribution, Hobart points out that this sceptical position on practice in fact *necessarily* implicates the researcher – and a researcher's own articulatory practices of researching, recording, recounting, writing, and so forth – directly into the very constitution of this discursive field of human activity. The 'object' of practice therefore, placed within the sceptical framework here elaborated, is notably not an *object* at all, but a set of relationships in which the researcher is directly involved. Taken as a relational object of study, a practice-based approach starts to erode the traditional distinction between object

and method; the object of our study is in fact partly constituted by the method with which we determine it as an object.

While this implication of the researcher in the scene of their research might be taken to be a weakness in terms of the objective and scientific credentials of the research, I would like to argue that it can in fact be used as a strength – or at the very least, an opportunity – within our thinking about 'media practices'. To complete this definition of the present practice-based approach, we therefore need to briefly move to consider practice as a method – such as to set the scene for how this present approach might think about 'practising' as part of a way of studying the practices of other people.

Practice as Method

During my field work in Nairobi, I took on work placements with two media NGOs. I was contracted with the Cultural Video Foundation (CVF) as an Assistant Scriptwriter for their production of *Wazi?FM*, and was a 'facilitator' and later 'committee member' with the Slum Film Festival, based primarily at Mathare-based media NGO Slum-TV. The nature of these engagements seem to notably go beyond 'participant observation', which Cottle, writing in particular about news production ethnography, characterises as including "observation, talk and interviews, and attending to documentary sources" (2007: 6). Beyond this observational perspective, I actively worked to produce material and contribute to strategy meetings within the organisations, adding my voice to conversations, and seeking a place within each organisation's varied internal dynamics. These periods of engagement might therefore be thought of here as – within the provision of the limited period of time I spent in Nairobi and certainly without claiming the credentials of a long-time professional – as working as both a 'media' and a 'development' practitioner. Yet having framed 'practices' as articulatory in nature, the idea of a 'practitioner' in this sense certainly requires some careful consideration. I will now seek to make some account of what this sort of position might imply from the perspective of practice-based research, before highlighting in more detail what was involved in each respective engagement.

As has been noted, media studies scholarship has established a strong critical precedent for undertaking ethnographic research, realised by scholars who often greatly benefit from years professional experience in their field. Audience research might be seen as one of the earliest, and certainly most successful, ventures in this sense, where situated audience studies (cf. Ang 1991, 1996; Nightingale 1996) have posed a strong critical reply to the behaviourist presuppositions of mass media research. In the field of production ethnography, Somnath Batabyal's work on news journalism in India draws on over a decade of his personal experiences as a professional journalist, a perspective which he builds directly into his research framework. Thinking through standpoint theory, Batabyal, quoting Sreberny, reflects on why "I, the articulating academic, find certain issue of value to explore but more importantly, how my subjectivity resonates with and through the subject matter as I analyse it" (Sreberny 2002: 294-95; quoted in Batabyal 2012: 17). This importantly reflects within the methodology of his analysis the tension of "viewing events from 'the inside' – the 'I' as news practitioner – and from 'the outside' – the 'I' as researcher" (2012: 17). As Batabyal goes on, his years of experience as a practitioner influence the nature of his own approach, inflecting the questions he asks with a deeper understanding of the assumptions of practitioners in his field (2012: 32). Yet despite the emerging tendency of its scholars to live double-lives as media practitioners – especially within the context of studies in social media and the internet – media studies has offered relatively little concerted critical reflection on the methodological problems of studying practices through acts of practising.

In other disciplines, most notably UK schools of art and design, the role of the practitioner/academic has had more explicit engagement. A 2007 report by the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) identifies a trend in arts and design research of situating "scholarship in a professional practice setting" (2007: 10), and extending upon this conceptualises 'practice-led research' as those situated professional research activities "that complement methods of enquiry adopted from the humanities and sciences" (2007: 10). This focus on 'practice' was a recognition of a need to understand how academics were themselves also and concurrently active artists and designers. This need to theorise a

researcher's duality as both practitioner and scholar became a point of particular contention in design research. Mechanical engineer Bruce Archer, for example, convincingly argued for the appropriation of practice-based 'action research' within the broadly scientific episteme of scholarship on technological design (1995). To Archer such 'action research' was any research in which "the investigator is explicitly taking action in and on the real world in order to devise or test or shed light upon something" (1995: 11). In his working paper *Locatedness and the Objectivity of Interpretation in Practice-based Research* (2008) philosopher Clive Cazeaux explores similar ideas through the example of research student Jan Bennett, who devised a piece of audiovisual installation art as a way of exploring emotional responses such as discomfort and feelings of ambiguity in viewers: "artist-researchers find relations between the concepts they use in their aesthetic responses to their practice" (Cazeaux 2008: 10). Cazeaux goes on to theorise that, within artistic practice-led research strongly influenced by the subjectivity of experience, artists are able (in an almost ironic sense) to create research through which "the 'I' is suspended" (2008: 9). Such research in art and design positions the researcher at the centre of creative or artistic acts, and therefore as the source of thoughts and reflection on acts of creativity and art.

How does this aesthetic field of thinking relate to our current body of thought in media research? Archer's work in technological design draws on concept of 'action research', and suggest that a predefined theory might be tested in practice by a professional. This approach therefore works with a largely uncomplicated presupposition in which 'doing something' is broadly equated with 'understanding it', and rests therefore on a positivist epistemology that sees knowledge or understanding as situated in the real world, waiting to be discovered through applied testing. As the preceding considerations of the role of ethnography in media studies suggests, Archer's approach does not therefore seem to neatly configure to the ways that the issue of 'practices' has been raised in the context of media studies. Furthermore, the aesthetic questions that interest Cazeaux are difficult to place within the generally more political interests of media research. Trying to reconcile and synthesise these fields, if even possible, is certainly beyond the scope of this current

account. However there is some worth in noting a striking familiarity between Cazeaux's reflection that practising art can reveal features of the interpretative dynamics of artistic consumption, and the notion in media studies that practising through ethnography can reveal features of the dynamics of media production and reception. What taking Cazeaux's reflections seriously in the context of media studies might be seen to reveal is the persistence of the dichotomisation in media scholarship between researchers and their objects of study, a preoccupation that seems to have far less grip on the academic imaginations of art and design.

To extend the field of practice-related questions established by Helle-Valle and Hobart, I would like to draw on this *in*-distinction between researcher and object of study by recognising and working with, as Hobart suggests, the imbrication of my own articulatory practices with the definition of the practice under consideration – or as Sreberny phrases it, "how my subjectivity resonates with and through the subject matter" (Sreberny 2002: 295). Furthermore, and partly inspired by the field of art and design, I would also like to open the question of 'practice as method' to a broader range of articulatory practices: practices of reenacting, reproducing, and creating; and question whether or not such practices can produce reflections about the practices of the 'culturalisation of development' in useful or insightful ways.

Sketches of a Practice-based Approach

As an explorative framework, I would like to break my thinking about practice-based research into four qualities, as a way to help thinking through some of the implications of this approach: i) proximity; ii) re-enactment; iii) difference; iv) dialogue. As the ethnographic moment in media studies has rightly valorised, the closeness of a researcher to his or her subjects of study serves as an important starting position for the study of situated accounts of how media and society interrelate. However, more than a simple question of geographical or physical closeness, this relationship is one of discursive *proximity*, of a researcher's proximity to the articulating practices through which discursive totalities are

constituted, and in which ideas about society and social organisation are exercised and exchanged within the folds of everyday life. In establishing this proximity, the practice-based approach therefore seeks to *re-enact* the articulatory practices of others, such as to enter into a proximal relation with its discourse. However, as proximity is therefore the diminishment of discursive distance, the quality of proximity therefore accentuates the interplay of *difference* between myself as a researcher, and articulating subject to which I seek a proximal relation. I do not 'become' the enacting or articulating subject, but rather take on and re-enact their subjectivity in an attempt to better understand it, and in re-enacting transform it. This approach therefore foregrounds my own discursive positionality within my practices of researching. It is from this position, as both proximal and yet different, that the research might then be able to reveal social practice not as ritualistic or formalised, but as a *dialogue*, contested and transforming over time. Importantly, it is exactly from this foregrounding of positionality – of the persistent strangeness and alienation that comes with re-enactment – that *dialogue* might be made visible.

To think this briefly through a current example, my proximity to practices of the culturalisation of development in Nairobi was not simply granted because I went to Nairobi and sat in production offices, but exactly because I sought to re-enact the media-related practices of different professionals, practices through which they articulated their relationship to Nairobi's media and development environment. In the very literal sense, I *joined in* with the practices of others. However this process never resulted in a perfect assimilation - I was haunted throughout my research by my contradictory roles as practitioner, participant and researcher; of a local within the boundaries of a particular project, and foreigner within the city. My difference to discourses to which I sought proximity was pronounced. And yet it was exactly this difference that allowed me to reflect on the changing nature of the dialogue of ideas that move through the projects that I engaged with.

These four qualities are not offered here as a scale against which we might value or judge the success of any given practice-based approach. They are instead four ways of thinking

about the tensions of closeness and alienation, familiarity and strangeness, that qualify this present practice-based approach.

Methods Undertaken

In outlining his own research approach, Batabyal writes of a 'triangulation' of different methods to provide the broader coverage of material within an ethnographic encounter (2012: 17-18). I similarly undertook a triangulation of methods, working amongst practice-based field notes, semi- and open-structured interviews, and literature reviews and textual analysis. Practice-based field notes included taking account of meetings, internal communications, and the daily goings on of production offices, to whatever extent I was able to observe and participate in them – a significant limitation when, at the offices for Slum-TV for example, the day's work entailed people sitting behind their computers writing emails or drafting reports. Within this practice-based approach, these field notes were also a space for reflecting my own feelings and actions in what was at times almost auto-ethnographic mode of thinking. Other forms of writing also constitute the body of material I aggregated in this sense: emails to other group members, for example, which often served as opportunities to work through ideas within the production, or else re-enacted a particular position required of me by the production; or drafts of eventually published documents circulated between producers, funders, and events organisers, and upon which revealing comments would digitally accumulate during the drafting process.

In addition to this messy body of experiences to which the taking of field notes sought to give some sense of narrative order, I also relied upon occasional interviews with key participants throughout the course of the research. These were often open-interviews, which on occasion blurred into what what Cottle (2007) calls 'talk', casually enveloped into broader production-related practices. Occasionally these interviews were even entirely unexpected: during a two hour delay to a meeting at the Refugee Consortium of Kenya, CVF producer Vincenzo Cavallo spoke at length about his work and how he imagined himself within Nairobi's cultural and development sectors, while we shared a muffin and had a coffee in the basement of Adam's Shopping Arcade. On other occasions, semi-

structured interviews proved useful ways for me to pose particular questions or lines of thought that had occurred to me, for various reasons, might prove insightful.

Finally, I used what I have called here literature and textual analysis, but which describes what would more commonly be referred to as 'discourse analysis'. However, given the particular specification the term 'discourse' has been granted here, is seemed wise to rephrase this method. What this entailed is the qualitative analysis and review of textual material, through which I hoped to develop a better sense of the broader discursive framework within which productions and events were being organised and initiated. In particular, by reviewing documents and materials drawn from broader social conversations and sources – ranging from published government policy papers, news articles, to short audiovisual productions – the intention has been to produce a richer, and more nuanced, sense of the discursive nesting of the current research.

Initial and General Limitations

There are several key limitations amongst these approaches. The limitation that struck me most regularly was a question of available time, central to what Murphy and Kraidy laud as ethnography's "immersion" and "building of trust" through "long-term observation" (Murphy & Kraidy 2003: 3). This was not simply the function of time constraints of the thesis, but also part of the nature of the productions themselves. Preparation for the Slum Film Festival was staggered over the year, however accumulated toward the event's actual launch and was otherwise punctuated by long periods of inactivity and silence. In a similar way, the production of *Wazi?FM* was often precarious, with funding uncertain and production slowing down at several intervals. Unlike an anthropological study of the daily life of a community, in which the research's temporality is more or less coextensive with the temporal flow of everyday life, this study of small scale media projects is often broken up and divided into smaller pieces of engagement.

Within the timeframe of this research, I was in Nairobi between June and August 2012 and then again from February to October 2013. This fall considerably short of the decades

many anthropologists spend understanding single communities, and Nairobi is hardly a single community. Furthermore, unlike many media scholars, I do not have years of practical experience in my field to fall back on. I am convinced that, were I to approach this kind of research today, having experienced what I have now experienced, I would conduct things very differently. This approach is, to my mind, very much a first step in what I hope will be a lifelong engagement with the city and its many worlds and stories. Notably I am also not entirely foreign to Nairobi, and have been familiar with the city for many years; it was the city where my mother was raised, and where much of my extended family have lived. On my regular drive – in my grandmother's old sky blue (now rust red) 1976 Mazda – from Westlands down through the city's industrial district toward Mathare, I would frequently pass the garage and car dealership that my grandfather ran in the 1970s and 1980s. If anything, it does not take very much to locate me, as a broad set of features, amongst the coordinates of the articulatory fields of the city: as a mzungu – or white person – whose family were in Kenya during and after its colonisation by the British; as a middle-class foreigner working in a media-related field, I suspect many would not be surprised to find me at the Art Cafe at the Junction or, before its destruction, the Westgate shopping centres, sitting behind a Macbook.

Another important limitation of this study is language. Language and translation have long been a traditional concern in anthropology, and in the present study this is no less the case, with an important amendment. English is an official national language in Kenya,[22] and its common distribution meant I was able to conduct this research in English. As such translation was not a 'direct' problem in so far as I did not need to translate primary research material, or rely on an interpreter. However while English is an official language in Kenya, it is also an 'official' language – within casual parlance and communication within offices or on location, the more common experience was casual slippages from English to Swahili, and occasionally Sheng and vernacular dialects depending on circumstance. Within CVF and the *Wazi?FM* project, this slippage was instead between English and

[22] Highlighted in Article 7 of the 2009 Kenyan Constitution.

Italian. While I was able to adapt to some occasional use of Swahili – I speak no Italian[23] – it was generally recognised that I was an English speaker. As a result, my presence often *caused translation* within groups. While not reducing this to a formal/informal distinction between English and non-English communication, it is worth noting that the story that my research can tell, and the insights its engagement gathered, are therefore filtered through an anglophone prism whose implications in Nairobi's media environment are not necessarily simple. In foregrounding these limitations, the hope here is not to overcome them, but rather try to make more apparent how they contribute to the 'resonation of my subjectivity' through the stories and narratives which this research hopes to detail.

Ethical Concerns

Finally, taking a practice-based approach – in which the researcher is embedded within production and event related practices of a media environment – opens the need for some ethical clarification. Primarily, all organisations and participants were fully aware that I was a researcher, working on a PhD that was seeking to understand how media projects operated in the context of development. Interestingly, my critical stance toward development was generally shared and supported. Neither Federico Olivieri, the founder of the Slum Film Festival, nor producers at CVF had uncomplicated relationships to what they considered 'development'. They all talked about their own work as doing something different to mainstream approaches. In the case of my work with CVF, I signed a contract with the group which both specified my professional responsibilities within their group, as well as safe-guarding own right to use my work with them as the basis for my research. With the Slum Film Festival there was no official contract of work or specific terms of reference between myself and Slum-TV, however the fact that I was a researcher was widely known. In both cases, I was unpaid.

However, the fact that my being a researcher was known is not the same thing as saying that everybody, at all times, knew that anything they said in earshot of me was liable to

[23] I noted with some irony in early field notes that, in working with development agencies in Nairobi, speaking Italian, Spanish and French would have been more immediately useful than Swahili.

become public record. That is to say, my presence did not imply a total lack of privacy for anybody in my general vicinity. This marks a somewhat complex ethical problem of the responsibility of research to report pertinent and valuable findings, balanced with what it has the right to report. The distinction in this regard is not always clear. In respect to this, I have simply had to exercise personal discretion to the best of my judgment. There were several moments throughout this research during which, under some stress or during a moment of emotional tension, a practitioner might have complained about a funder behind their back, or a filmmaker questioned the honesty or integrity of another. Reporting on such moments, taken out of context and articulated as moments of academic interest, would be misleading and ethically irresponsible. However on other occasions details of disputes or arguments between producers and scriptwriters, for example, which might not always paint these parties in the professional light they might wish to represent themselves, nevertheless adds important detail to how the ideas of development are articulated in actuality; or to take the language elaborated in this present approach, valuable details about how development is practised.

Finally, and related to this idea of the ethics of writing about the lives and work of other people, I feel strongly that the narrative that I have produced here is something that I should be able to defend not just intellectually, but defend when this research is hopefully read by those people were kind enough to allow me access to their lives. Centrally, while I am at times critical of some of the practices that I have encountered over the duration of this research, these criticisms should nevertheless be defensible when confronted by somebody who was there too, in the same office, and engaged in similar activities.

Moving Forward

In summary, what makes the issue of ‘practice’ so stimulating to think about – and think *through* – is the fact that it seems to sit at the meeting point of several key critical tensions in media studies: the epistemological tension between scientific objectivity and the promise of ethnography to grasp at thick description and detailed analysis; the political tension of

media study's penchant for political critique, and the realisation that sometimes people do not share the same political interests; the ontological tension about the nature of meaning and the issue of – or impossibility of – 'underlying reality'. A definition of 'practice', as the argument between Couldry and Hobart underlines, requires us to make deep choices; it draws a line in the sand. By taking on a definition of articulatory practices grounded in the critical nomenclature of Ernesto Laclau, while as also taking on practising myself as a more experimental – and potentially deeply problematic – further exploration of this field, I hope to have made my own choices clear. The ambition of this 'practice-based' approach is therefore to provide throughout this thesis some initial research into a small slice of development's articulatory practices within and through cultural projects in Nairobi.

I will now move into two studies, framed in terms of this practice-based approach, with the hope of both offering some insight into the narratives and articulations that intersect Nairobi's media and development worlds, while advancing an initial exploration of the notion of a practice-based approach. I do so with the ambition that this research might offer some small contribution to the ongoing conversation into whether 'practices' might (and might not) constitute a useful 'new paradigm' in critical media research.

Chapter 3

Articulating the Urban Refugees of Nairobi: *Wazi?FM* and the CVF

An old man stands grimacing in front of a bright blue canvas, one hand pointing toward the ceiling while he stares down the barrel of a Canon 5D camera. Three people hold out lightbanks to resolve the shadows cast against the backdrop. The man is directed through an emotional sequence, moving from dispassionate stillness to an expression of happiness at some absent discovery. He lowers his hand, then is told to raise it again, finger pointing toward an empty space where a thought bubble will be added in post-production, grinning with joyful surprise, take after take while the director calls out, “Smile! Smile! You’re happy. Look happy!”

It was my first day at the offices of the Cultural Video Foundation (CVF) and they were shooting the scene as part of an educational video training series about healthy fishing practices in the Great Lakes region. The project, funded by the UN’s Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), was designed to teach fisherman how to hygienically and economically catch, prepare and store fish. At the time what I saw were Europeans gathered voyeuristically around a floodlit Kenyan face as they struggled to elicit an acceptable emotional response from a disoriented actor. As I watched, director Alessandra Argenti and cinematographer Silvia Gioiello attempted to explain the particular form of happiness the scene required. It was a peculiar kind of happiness: the joy of learning something useful; at making some valuable new discovery. It was, I reflected, the kind of smile that development wants to solicit from its subjects: the smile of enlightenment. Yet to me, a visitor from outside the production team, the old actor’s smile seemed pained. His body arched

unnaturally in performance, confronted by a director frustrated by the gap between her reality and his.

Over the six months that I was involved with CVF, between March and September 2013, I returned to this image of the old man's overwrought smile, rethinking my original judgments. I joined CVF as the FAO video training project was ending, and so was not directly involved in their production. I gradually learned of the strong distinction in how CVF approached 'service contract' projects such as FAO's educational video trainings, compared to co-production projects in which they were contractually afforded more creative input. Under the conditions of a 'service contract', media producers are generally divested of any direct economic interest in the production itself, and are simply hired to provide production services for a client – in the current case, commonly a conglomeration of NGOs and/or UN organisations – while working within strict project guidelines. As I was to later realise, such a contract gave FAO broad powers to set many of the conditions for how the video trainings were organised. And such service contract projects, while perceived by CVF's production team as necessary for cashflow, were generally taken on reluctantly.

What my initial impressions failed to account for was the potential for deep internal conflicts within organisations like CVF as they fought for survival and self-determination amidst the interests and priorities of their funders. Some of the features of such internal resistance within CVF became more evident over time, demonstrated in the ways that the educational and often proselytising agendas of donor organisations were thought of in relation to a more 'cultural' form of audiovisual production. In spite of being a registered NGO itself, producers at CVF actively positioned themselves against an 'NGO rhetoric' (a term often used by CVF's three Italian producers) that is perceived to dominate Nairobi's cultural sectors. Furthermore, rather than clarity within CVF about the qualities they hoped to enshrine through their work, the group is in fact conflicted about the kind of work that it does. Strong recurring disagreements between its three Italian producers ran throughout their projects, often concerned with what 'cultural' filmmaking is, as well as the role of film in education, the definition of an 'NGO rhetoric', and the impact of development funding on

their work and sector. This internal dissent suggests a far more complex network of contestations amongst culture, development, and audiovisual production at work within CVF than is immediately apparent. Far from the relative critical simplicity of my interpretation of the old Kenyan actor grimacing before the intrusive European lens, during my time with CVF 'culture' itself emerged as a continuously contested notion, inviting deeper enquiry and critique.

This chapter describes the time I spent working with CVF. During this time I was in fact involved in two of CVF's productions, although only one of these successfully developed into a full production. The first of these, which occupies the central focus of this research, was the production of *Wazi?FM* (henceforth, Wazi[24]), a fictional feature film that was funded as part of a broader European Union (EU) grant for work on 'urban refugees' in Nairobi. The second of my engagements with CVF was the production of a short documentary on the police abuse of urban refugees in Nairobi that had been commissioned by IRIN, a 'humanitarian media and news agency' run out of UNOCHA.[25] However, while this documentary was eventually completed, its production was delayed until after the end of my period of field work. I mention it here as, while I was not fully involved in the IRIN production, I was involved in much of the initial interviewing and research that went in to establishing the groundwork for the documentary. Taking place concurrently with the production of Wazi, the groundwork for the IRIN documentary therefore occasionally provided interesting insights into the lives of urban refugees that went on to influence some of the conversations that emerged during Wazi.

The Cultural Video Foundation was established in 2007 as an audiovisual production company, legally registered in Kenya as an NGO, with the intention to "use journalism and multimedia products to inform, educate, and mobilize social development" (*About*, culturalvideo.org). Their work includes the production of social documentaries, most notably *Maskaniflani* (2009), a story of Nairobi band Ukoo Flani's travels in the south Kenyan city of

[24] Wazi (non-italicised) will henceforth be used to refer to the entire Wazi production as a project. *Wazi?FM* (italicised) refers to the film production that resulted from Wazi.

[25] United Nations Organisation for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Mombasa, and *Twende Berlin* (2011), a 'docufiction' that follows Ukoo Flani as they travel to Berlin in an exploration of concepts of public ownership of urban space in Kenya and Germany. Both were produced through 'Urban Mirror', a spin-off project within CVF focused on the crowd-mapping of publicly owned space in urban centres, and supported by the Goethe Institute of Kenya.[26] Alongside these more ambitious social documentaries, CVF's work primarily consists of "promotional and informational videos for NGO's, international organizations, and private companies" ("About", culturalvideo.org) such as NGO-funded participatory-documentaries *Hadithi ya Uamuzi* ('A Story of Determination/Choice', 2011) and *Kuwa Rada* ('Be Aware/Have Understanding', 2011). Producer Alessandra Argenti, one of the three Italian managing directors of CVF, drives many of these participatory video projects, describing herself as "passionate about participatory video", something she sees as her "life's work" (Argenti, *personal conversation*,14 February 2013).

Vincenzo Cavallo, the producer behind the Urban Mirror spin-off, takes a very different interest in CVF, paying less attention to community participatory videos and pushing instead for high quality productions with strong political messages. Cavallo speaks often of his past experiences in what he describes as the 'Italian anarchist' movement of the 1990s and his time as an anti-globalisation activist, which he suggests forms the root of his interest in exploring politics of public space through urban culture. Silvia Gioiello, who takes a less central role in driving and defining new projects, works primarily as CVF's cinematographer and executive producer, often managing the budgets and administration for CVF productions and occasionally working on set behind a camera. The three Italian managing directors are assisted in their productions by project-specific specialists and occasional interns.

The antagonisms of these pre-production relationships among funders, writers, producers and directors played out in moments of disagreement over the project's definition, confusion about how to proceed, misunderstandings about the expectations of funders and facilitating partners, and fear over political correctness and the project's acceptability to its

[26] The Goethe Institute is a global German cultural institute, with a large East African centre based in Nairobi.

primary donor, the European Union. These disagreements varied between organisations, as well as between individuals within organisations, and were generally concerned with what was, on the one hand, the right humanitarian focus for the project, and on the other, what was appropriately 'cultural' for a media production. This turbulent and conflictual discussion I will therefore call the production's human/culture antagonism. This terminology draws explicitly from the critical nomenclature elaborated by Ernesto Laclau (1985): 'antagonism' here does the work of specifically highlighting the limits of a discourse; it points to friction and a state of change, and to those ideas that rest outside the understanding of a given discourse, undermining and disrupting its "discursive totality" (Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 106). Specifically, the developmental discourse on the value of human life, and the cultural discourse about its representation, collapse into instances of conflict and discord. As I propose over this chapter and that which follows, this human/culture antagonism might be seen to rest at the centre of discussions of media and development, as it is exactly the representation of the worth and values of human life which fixes the intersection of discourse on media production with that of international aid and development.

I end this chapter with a reference to a moment of particular discursive (and human) crisis: the attack on Nairobi's Westgate shopping centre on 21 September 2013 by Somali militants. The attack, which drew national and international attention to the question of Somali Islamist group Al-Shabaab, took place one week before *Wazi* was scheduled to start shooting. As I will argue, this moment of crisis disrupted the cultural and political discourse within which the production of Wazi had been taking place, re-politicising it in unexpected ways and, through a series of emergency production meetings between CVF and CISP, made visible several of its more naturalised dynamics.

First, however, I will attempt to clarify some of the features of the social and political context within which the sense of moral and political responsibility that drove the production of Wazi was grounded, and through which its production was made 'developmentally' meaningful.

States of Insecurity: foregrounding the challenges of Somali urban refugees in Kenya

Through an exchange of press releases and inter-ministerial letters between December 2012 and January 2013 the Kenyan government issued several orders to the Kenyan police and Refugee Office administrators that quickly became a focal point for civil society activities in Nairobi. Often referred to collectively as 'the Directive', these government communications outlined a plan for the mass relocation and eventual deportation of all Somali refugees from urban areas around Nairobi. The move was presented by the Kenyan government as a response to rising threat of violent attacks by and against urban refugee communities. As a letter from the Department of Refugee Affairs to administrators of Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps dated 10 January 2013 clarifies:

> Following a series of grenade attacks in urban areas where many people were killed and many more injured, the government has decided to stop registration of asylum seekers in urban areas with immediate effect.
>
> All Asylum Seekers should be directed to Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps for Reception, Registration and Refugee Status Determination, Issuance of Movement Passes for non-resettlement cases should also stop immediately.
>
> In addition, the government shall put in place necessary preparation to repartriate (sic.) Somali refugees living in urban areas.
>
> Commissioner for Refugee Affairs, 10 January 2013[27]

The Directive followed a period of escalated violence throughout 2011 and 2012 in the Eastleigh neighbourhood of Nairobi. Eastleigh, a region extending from Mlango Kubwa near Mathare Valley down toward the city's southern industrial district, is an area so heavily settled by Somali communities it has become what anthropologist Neil Carrier calls a "Little Mogadishu" (2014). Carrier draws the term from broader popular use; as ex-policeman Armstrong Maina explained during an interview for his part in the IRIN documentary, Kenyan security services are well aware that "whatever happens in Mogadishu, you can learn about it first in Eastleigh" (Maina, *Interview with CVF*, 6 September 2013). This conflation of Mogadishu and Nairobi has turned Eastleigh into a region of particular interest

[27] Extracted from a letter from the Commissioner for Refugee Affairs, addressed to government administrators in charge of Refugee Offices in Dadaab and Kakuma in northern Kenya. This letter is available from affidavits published in Kenyan High Court Judgment to Petitions No. 19 and 115 of 26 July 2013, and was widely circulated amongst Nairobi's legal aid NGOs at the time.

to humanitarian relief and development work focusing on disenfranchised refugee populations. It has also seen Eastleigh become a central stage for government interventions and military raids, targeting a perceived root of Somali extremism. This environment of escalating tension had seen urban refugees become a central feature – or as Vincenzo Cavallo put it, the "third highest priority" (*CVF production meeting,* 25 September 2013) – in Kenyan politics prior to the Westgate mall terrorist attack of late September 2013.

While internal human displacement and migration from areas of conflict have been serious concerns in Kenya's post-colonial political landscape from as early as 1971, when Idi Amin's military coup d'état in Uganda resulted in an influx of refugees in the country, the particular rise of Somali refugee populations far overshadows other refugee communities in terms of both extent and political significance. As statistics accumulated by the UNHCR indicate, of the approximately 600,000 refugees that Kenya had accepted by mid-2013, 482,000 are registered as being of Somali origin (UNHCR 2015). The UNHCR furthermore lists over 40 strategic partners working on their refugee projects in Kenya (UNHCR 2014), the majority being local Kenyan NGOs, and lists a total in-country budget of $229 million for 2014 (UNHCR 2015). These statistics indicate, to an extent, a reason Somali communities have taken such a central position within the broader questions of the treatment of refugees and constitutional protection of human rights. Given the extent of their migration, Somali refugees fast became the central focus of both the Kenyan Government's Department of Refugee Affairs, and international and national level organisations investing in refugee issues.

Furthermore, Somalia – bordering Kenya to the north – has an association to anti-state hostilities that has complicated the position of Somali immigrants, as well as ethic Somali Kenyans (Lochery 2012), living within Nairobi. In his introduction for the United Nations resolution 2093 on the "Situation in Somalia", Roland Adjovi writes of the UN's work in Somali as one of "the rebuilding of statehood" of a "failed state" (Adjovi 2013: 1185). The Somali civil war of 1991 led to a splintering of political power in the region – including the

declaration of independence of Somaliland and Puntland – during which various warlords and military dictators struggled for control of the country's resources. While a moment of relative calm was reached under the guidance of the Union of Islamic Courts, a Sharia-based institution which brought together and moderated many of the political parties in Somalia for the first time in over a decade, the US-backed bombing of the courts in Mogadishu arguably deeper entrenched marginalisation and extremism, and gave rise to Salafist Islamist organisation al-Shabaab. The 'rebuilding of statehood' in Somalia outlined in Adjovi's introduction to UN resolution 2093 accordingly accentuates military and security issues in the region, as well as recent advances made by the 'African Union Mission to Somalia' (AMISOM) for the organisation of democratic elections in 2012. Despite – and perhaps in part due to – this programme of economic and political stabilisation, Somali militant groups have continued to pose national security threats within Kenya, most notable of which being the 2012 militant siege on the Westgate shopping mall.

The 2013 Directive, in which the Kenyan government sought for the first time to explicitly address questions of national security through its domestic policies on refugees and human migration, was the strongest position yet taken by the government on the 'issue' of Somali refugees articulated in relation to ideas of Kenyan national security. Not only did the Directive underline an emergent category of refugee – the 'urban refugee' – as a new social and cultural group that required specialised legislation, but it made explicit the popular assumption that Somali refugees are linked to subversive anti-state terrorism. The grenade attacks to which the Directive refers were part of a phase of increased violence that followed the Kenyan Defence Forces' military intervention into southern Somalia in October 2011, in an operation know as 'Linda Nchi' ("Protect the country"). The military invasion was met by a series of retaliatory bombings and grenade attacks in Nairobi's Eastleigh district, kidnappings in the northern town of Garissa, assaults by militia around the north eastern island of Lamu, and most sensationally the armed siege of Nairobi's Westgate shopping mall on 21 September 2013. This ongoing violence resulted in iterative retaliatory action by the Kenyan police, who responded with a series of operations in Eastleigh that journalist James Reinl, interview by CVF for the IRIN documentary, described as "10 weeks of

hell" (Reinl, 2013). The Directive, in targeting urban Somali refugees in 'grenade attacks', therefore articulated a conflation between refugees and terrorists, promoting the perception of refugees as a threat to Kenyan national sovereignty.

As international relations scholar Emma Lochery notes in her research into the screening tests of 1989 in which the Kenyan government institutionalised the physical discrimination between ethnic Kenyan Somalis and Somalis from Somalia, the Kenyan government has a long tradition of "citizenship verification" that is "not only about drawing lines between insiders and outsiders, but also about which insiders belong where" (2012: 616). As suggested in an interview for the IRIN documentary with Rukia, a Somali woman and victim of rape by police officers in Eastleigh, denying the authenticity of passcards and identification papers was a key strategy in the practices of police abuse. As the international NGO Human Rights Watch comment in their report *"You Are All Terrorists"* (2013), a "wave of abuses" were perpetrated in Eastleigh by police between November 2012 and January 2013 (Human Rights Watch 2013), and covers accounts of torture, rape and police extortion of Somali and Ethiopian refugees, in the guise of anti-terrorism and civilian protection.

Reframing the 'Issue' of Urban Refugees: a civil society perspective

This marginalisation and implicit criminalisation of Somali refugees as part of a Kenyan national/political discourse gave rise to a strong opposition from civil society organisations already working on refugee and human rights issues. A review of the two Kenyan High Court legal petitions No. 19 and 115 of 2013 launched by legal advocacy organisation Kituo cha Sheria reveals three legally distinct issues taken against the government action. First, the petitions criticised the overly-generalised and unfair categorisation of 'urban refugees' without any serious engagement with the complexity of urban refugee life. Secondly, the petitions noted that the Directive was potentially in violation of the Kenyan constitutional protection of rights to dignity (Article 28) and rights to movement (Article 39). Finally, the petition notes that the Directive furthermore violates international legal statutes for the protection of civilians, in particular the United Nations Refugee Convention of 1951 and the

International Convention on Civil and Political Rights. This legal intervention eventually led to the successful overthrowing the Directive on 26 July 2013.

However, while the argument for the violation of national and international law were to be central features of the legal petitions, it was the spirit of the first of these approaches which resonates closest with the rest of the aid and development sector. The oppositional mobilisation of civil society that followed the announcement of the Directive seemed to focus heavily not on the violation of human rights, but the issue of urban refugees, their categorisation, and their treatment. As the case put to the Kenyan High Courts by Kituo cha Sheria reads, the 2013 Directive:

> … did not take into account the various classes and categories of refugees resident in urban areas. These include refugees who are professionals or businesspeople, those who have married Kenyans, those residing with their families, those who need and require and are currently undergoing medical treatment that cannot be offered in the camps and those pursuing education.
>
> High Court of Kenya, Petition No. 19 and No. 115 of 2013: 6

A review of report publications and programme agendas from major actors in the refugee sub-sector of humanitarian aid in Kenya reveals a practical focus on the questions of fair access to healthcare and education, the provision of basic social services, and the enforcement of the responsibility and accountability of the host state to provide these services. Organisations such as the Humanitarian Policy Group (Pavanello, Elhawary & Pantuliano 2010), Danish Refugee Council and Refugee Consortium of Kenya (2013) and Human Rights Watch (cf. 2010, 2013) have started conducting sociological and legal research into the quality of the lives of Kenya's refugee populations, developing and publishing a series of narrative reports that seek to illuminate the hardships of refugee life. Human Rights Watch's report *"You Are All Terrorists"* (2013) further explores this narrative, yet in the context of Nairobi, expounding upon the particular precariousness of refugees living in urban environments with little or no state support. In parallel, legal advocacy groups such as the Refugee Consortium of Kenya (RCK) and Kituo cha Sheria have worked on providing legal aid and support tailored specifically to the needs of urban refugee populations, such as specialised information on processes for legal registration, and the clarification of legal rights and entitlements.

Civil society's reaction to an environment of increasing tension seems to have turned aside from the Kenyan government's legal premises for the 2013 Directive. Perhaps the violation of constitutional and international law was presupposed by such actors. We might take for granted, for example, that any report published by 'Human Rights Watch' necessarily implies that human rights have been violated. Instead, such civil society actors focused on redressing the identification and categorical treatment of urban refugees within Nairobi. The questions here were no longer about the legal treatment of urban refugees, but was rather about who these refugees were, how they lived, what support they required, and what injustices the suffered in daily life. The distinction made was no longer between refugee and terrorist, but refugee and mother, and wife, and woman; between the refugee and illness, or education. In this sense the publications and projects that constitute civil society's response to the 'urban refugee issue' in Nairobi might be seen as contributing to a discursive political shift in the treatment of urban refugees that has moved from a discourse on nationality and security and legality, to one focused on identity and corresponding acts of identification and discrimination. It has therefore been part of a shift from conversations about the legal and the national, to conversations about the cultural, introducing questions of identity, gender, ethnicity, and class, beneath the generalised banner of our shared humanity. It is as part of this treatment of Nairobi's urban refugees in this latter 'cultural' sense that the Wazi project might then be seen to operate, as an audiovisual production seeking to redress xenophobic cultural bias against Somalis living within the city.

Wazi?FM and The NURRIA Project: the identity crisis of the Nairobi refugee

This brief overview of the contemporary conversation on Somali urban refugees amongst Nairobi's civil society organisations allows a slightly more detailed account of the discursive formation of *Wazi?FM* as a 'humanitarian' production, rather than an exclusively economically determined marketable one (although the production demonstrates elements of all of these). Where the urbanity of refugee populations represented to the Kenyan government, as evidenced in the 2013 Directive, a seemingly ungovernable and

unaccounted for internal threat, civil society and legal aid organisations engaged with urban environments as places where the needs of refugee populations were more difficult to address and manage. For 'The International Committee for the Development of Peoples' (CISP), an Italian NGO and the project's key facilitating partner, the production of Wazi was nestled within a larger programme of work entitled NURRIA, in which CISP was a secondary implementing partner, and which sought to address 'urban life' as a specific condition in discussions about civilian protection.

The NURRIA project, an acronym for the 'Nairobi Urban Refugee Rights Integration Activities' project, was a three year initiative between 2010 and 2013 implemented primarily by UK-based International Rescue Committee (IRC) as part of their broader Urban Refugees Programme, and funded by a €1.35 million European Union grant. As CISP project manager Marco Labruno clarifies, the set of activities encapsulated by NURRIA were broadly invested in "strengthening the protection system" for urban refugees in Nairobi (*personal communication,* 19 August 2013). Specifically, the NURRIA project engaged survey-based research into the "overall protection environment" and the identification of legal advocacy issues (Muhereza 2012: 1) that relate in particular to the treatment of refugees living in urban centres. While this focus on 'urban refugees' builds upon existing legal precedent for the protection and support of refugees in general – often citing the revised 2010 Kenyan Constitution's protection of basic human rights (Article 21(1), Section 43), and the 2006 Kenya Refugees Act – the NURRIA project might be seen as a more specific engagement with the logistical challenges (in terms of the absence of education and healthcare, confusing registration processes, lack of clear laws about identification, and so forth) and legal challenges that arise from the increasing urbanisation of refugee populations; challenges previously not encountered when such populations remained ghettoised in fenced encampments. As the IRC notes in an outline of their Urban Refugee programme, "many of the traditional approaches used by humanitarian agencies in refugee camps are not suitable in urban areas" (2012: 2). The question that these reports and publications raised is what exactly meant by 'urban' in this context, and how is the 'urban' treated as a condition of refugee life in Kenya?

The immediate answer to these questions relies on the identification of a definite urban space – specifically, the city of Nairobi – which is given the character of a new if complex refugee encampment. An urban refugee is in this sense defined simply as any refugee living in an urban space, rather than a refugee camp. However, what this 'space' is and how it operates coextensively to other linguistic and cultural spaces is significantly more complicated. Frank Emmanuel Muhereza, in a report developed by IRC as part of the NURRIA project, specifies his study as in part concerned with understanding and measuring "the 'space' within which [refugees] are able to demand, deploy, and enjoy the legally permissible refugee rights and freedoms in urban areas" (2012: 42). This linking of legal right and spatial location is illustrative of the particular antagonism to which the 'urban' within the humanitarian discourse on the refugee gives rise: the difficulty of the location and management of urban human rights within existing humanitarian programmes. Accordingly, the NURRIA project became particularly invested in "advocacy around refugee integration" (Muhereza 2012: 1), with 'integration' defined as both the cultural integration of refugee communities with coexisting communities, as well as their integration with "existing local authorities and … services" (IRC 2012: 2) in a context where there is "no clearly stated government policy on the provision of humanitarian assistance outside camps" (Muhereza 2012: 42).

It is within this context of a project focused on both the identification of urban refugee issues, and the goal of supporting the 'integration' of refugees in urban environments, that Wazi was initially conceived. According to Marco Labruna, CISP's Project Manager for Nurria and Marcella Ferracciolo, the overall Country Coordinator for CISP's activities in Kenya, Wazi represents the 'cultural' engagement of an otherwise broadly policy-driven programme of NURRIA. The final Wazi audiovisual production marks a €45,000 investment by the European Union in engaging with urban refugee life and human migration through audiovisual media, with the primary intention of providing information on "the paths to follow for a newcomer arriving in Nairobi" (Ferracciolo, *personal communication*, 23 May 2013), as well as promoting a vision of refugees as integrated within and beneficial to Nairobi society. As Marco Labruna puts it, "at the end of the day, the more people that watch this

movie, the more they should have the impression that refugees and Kenyans can live together" (*personal communication*, 19 August 2013).

The Wazi Pilot TV episodes: the European Union's apolitical refugee

It was from this perspective – working within the framework of the NURRIA project engagement with urban refugees and their integration in Kenyan society – that Wazi was initially commissioned. At the point at which I joined the Wazi production in March 2013, the project had already been developed as a television series and three pilot episodes had been produced with which to secure a future distribution deal with local television provider K24. These episodes, directed by CVF's Alessandra Argenti and based on scripts developed with Kenyan writer JC Niala, were commissioned on the basis of a 'service agreement' between CISP and CVF, and adhered strongly to the approach outlined by NURRIA, promoting social cohesion between Kenyans and Somalis, while highlighting the troubles and challenges that refugees in Nairobi suffered on a daily basis. This was to be done, however, while trying not to "put the blame on the Kenyan host" (Ferracciolo, *personal communication*, 23 May 2013) and balancing negative representations with some perspective on the positive aspects of refugee life. As Marcella Ferracciolo put it, with notable obfuscation:

> ...this situation with the Directive, we cannot ignore it, but at the same time we don't have to take a clear position which contravenes the position of the European Union, which decided not to take any clear position.
>
> Ferracciolo, *personal communication*, 23 May 2013

The peculiar trepidation in Ferracciolo's engagement with the government's Directive highlights an undercurrent of political abstention that formed a key contention throughout the Wazi production. This position is in a large part dictated by the EU's 'visibility policies' outlined in Section 6 of Annex II the EU's 'General Conditions applicable to European Union-financed grant contracts for external actions', which specifies the rules for the publication of EU logos, as well as the question of 'appropriate visibility' outlined in their visibility guidelines. The EU had dedicated personnel to check the visibility of their logos, and we are told would pay close attention to whether "the message [of *Wazi*] is taking a

clear position against the government [of Kenya] which they don't want to take" (Ferracciolo, *personal communication*, 23 May 2013). The pilot episodes of Wazi might, in this sense, be thought of an attempt by CISP to navigate this dualism of recognition without accountability, in an attempt to engage with the topics of human statelessness and xenophobic fears of Somali terrorism, while avoiding any comment on the relationship between Somali refugees and the Kenyan state. The question here then becomes, what is actually represented when a production seeks to depict something as politically charged as urban refugees in Nairobi, in a seemingly apolitical way? How is such a position made possible, and what are its strategies?

The Wazi pilot episodes tell the story of two young musicians, Somali refugee Momo[28] and Kenyan Kevo, holding their friendship together in an environment of entrenched xenophobia while working toward their dream of becoming successful hip hop musicians in Nairobi. Kevo, coming from a poor Kenyan family, dreams of fame and his big break in the music scene. Momo, while also aspiring toward something more in his life, finds himself caught by a tension between his dreams, and his obligation and dedication to his family and their Somali heritage. The episodes, which run for 25 minutes each, depict a friendship between Momo and Kevo complicated by racial and cultural anxieties, with the two friends finding themselves being pushed together and drawn apart in a series of personal life crises. To take an example from the production, the three pilot episodes start with a scene of Kevo and Momo running from Nairobi council officials for hawking goods at a street market. Kevo gets caught and taken to jail, while Momo contemplates whether or not to help his friend. The community of young Somali men with whom Momo surrounds himself urge Momo to forget Kevo, pushing Momo into an identity crisis which pulls him between his Kenyan home and Somali roots. In the episode's final scene Momo bails Kevo out of jail, but then in an ambiguous gesture ignores Kevo as he approaches Momo's car for a lift home, driving away without making eye contact. In a parallel narrative, this time told from the Kenyan perspective, Kevo is confronted by his mother about whether or not Momo can be trusted as the two friends plan to travel to Mombasa for a concert. Kevo assures her that

[28] Throughout production communications on Wazi, spelling of Momo's name alternated between 'Momo' and 'MoMo'. I will use Momo throughout here, unless quoting directly from source material.

Fig. 3.1 – Still from the opening credits of Wazi?, the original pilot of Wazi?FM. Copyright CVF/CISP, 2013.

Fig. 3.2 – Still from the closing scene of Episode 2 of the Wazi? pilot. School children celebrate as their conflict is resolved. Copyright CVF/CISP, 2013.

Fig. 3.3 – Still from Episode 3 of the Wazi? pilot. A Somali woman, Mariam, lies on the floor after having a miscarriage. Copyright CVF/CISP, 2013.

Fig. 3.4 – Still from the closing scene of Episode 3 of the Wazi? pilot. A mobile phone rings in rubble after a bomb attack on a train. Copyright CVF/CISP, 2013.

he can. In the pilot's final climactic scene, their train explodes just as Momo and Kevo depart Nairobi's central station, closing with an ominous shot of Momo's mobile phone ringing amongst the wreckage, inter-cut with scenes of Kevo's mother worrying at home that her suspicions might have been well founded after all.

Tensions between Somali and Kenyan communities within Nairobi became a central organising principle in the *Wazi?* pilot episodes. Several narrative arcs are developed in parallel to the main plot that explicitly seeks to construct – or as the pilot episodes' director Alessandra Argenti put it, expose – social and cultural conflicts between Kenya and its refugee communities. Alongside the friendship between Kevo and Momo, the first episode follows a football match in a Nairobi slum in which an 'urban refugee football team' compete against a local Kenyan team. Here, a young Congolese refugee struggles to understand the Kenyan government's refugee registration process. His Somali football coach talks him through the importance of getting the proper legal papers in order, in a scene that was requested by CISP, facilitators of the pilot episode's funding, as part of their mandate to provide public service information to refugee communities in Nairobi. In another scene a Somali woman Mariam is tired of having so many children and so decides to take a contraceptive pill. However, having not been informed adequately about how to take the contraceptive by the NGO that provided them, Mariam has a miscarriage. A Kenyan doctor refuses to treat her, as she's a Somali refugee, while elsewhere Mariam's husband tries to comprehend how a woman could not want more children. In a third storyline, filling the majority of the pilot's second episode, Momo breaks up a fight between Somali and Kenyan students at a primary school, while the violence causes flashbacks for a young Somali girl of her memories as a child soldier in Mogadishu.

Key themes emerge throughout the pilot episodes, of friendship (and occasionally romance) transcending community barriers; of cultural integration organised around communal events such as football and hip hop music; of education overcoming cultural nescience. This process of the individualisation of political questions about the precarious role of Somalis in Kenya transposes them into questions about relationships amongst

friends and family within a Somali community. This leads to the thematic treatment of xenophobia as a personal opinion, while reducing race-based hatred into a state of ignorance. In this way, the Wazi pilot episodes provide the narrative techniques through which its funders are able to escape broader statements about national policies and the government's own role in the various human crises of refugee populations. These early pilot episodes might therefore be seen as resembling what anthropologist James Ferguson has called 'the anti-politics machine' through which development programmes seem able to "suspend "politics" from even the most sensitive political operations at the flick of a switch" (Ferguson 1994: 180). Some care must be given to thinking through the implications of applying Ferguson's work, whose object of study is the "operation of the international "development" apparatus" (1994: 17) at the national infrastructural and economic levels, to a small and relatively isolated audiovisual production. However, Ferguson's reflection on "how a 'development' project can effectively squash political challenges to the system … by casting political questions … as technical "problems" responsive of the technical 'development' intervention" (1994: 180) helps us begin to unpack how CISP and the EU interpreted the 'problems' of urban refugees in Nairobi as a cultural difference requiring a technical intervention of cultural 'integration'. In resisting a political statement on a highly politicised situation, the Wazi pilots arguably work to transform a 'political reality' into a 'cultural and social reality' of a very different order. As will emerge, the definition of such a 'culture' and the narrative treatment of its 'community' will become central points of friction in the subsequent production of the Wazi feature film.

The Reevaluation of the Wazi Project

The Wazi pilot episodes not only failed to be picked up by Kenyan television channel K24 for future distribution, but they were unanimously dismissed for continued production by both CISP and CVF. In their dismissal, Ferracciolo and Labruna of CISP commented primarily on the low production quality, poor acting, and what to Ferracciolo was a badly written script of quick scene changes that made the story nearly impossible to follow. Vincenzo Cavallo, the producer at CVF who would eventually take lead over the production

of Wazi but who was not directly involved in the creation of the pilot episodes, commented internally that where the pilot episodes failed was in their overwhelming reliance on an "NGO rhetoric" (Cavallo, *CVF production meeting*, 27 May 2013). What therefore followed the production and internal release of these pilot episodes was a period of discussion between April and May 2013 over how the project might be salvaged. This discussion, which took place over email, by telephone call, and through various short production meetings, demonstrated a gradual shift in the focus and scope of the production, and culminated in the first full post-pilot production meeting of 27 May 2013. Taking on an official position as an assistant scriptwriter in the development of the new feature film version of Wazi, I was involved directly in CVF producers' practices of rethinking the pilots, such that I could later transfer these new ideas to JC Niala during the scriptwriting phase. I also worked as a liaison between CVF's production team and Marco Labruna and Marcella Ferracciolo of CISP on discussions about the integration of CVF's new production strategy with CISP's funding requirements. What was asked of me, for the most part, was to act as a sounding board during these transitional discussions, to contribute creatively to discussions about new ideas and directions for the feature film, and to help draft 'production strategies' to be presented to CISP in which CVF justified these new directions.

The shift within the production strategy between the pilot episodes and the feature film can be broken down into three stylistic shifts, organised around three separate yet related concepts: a divergence in ambition between television and film; a distinction between NGO rhetoric and what Cavallo came to call 'brutal realism'; and the ways that a Somali 'community' and its location within the other communities of Nairobi was to be visualised. First, due to a reduction in the funding offered by the EU for the project hat resulted from overall budgetary constraints in the NURRIA project, there was a conversation about transforming the television series into a 'television movie': a feature film produced primarily for television distribution. While this change was posed by CVF to CISP in terms of economic practicality, it also was related to a more subtle change in the ambition and scope of the project. This new ambition, introduced by CVF producer Vincenzo Cavallo, initiated a shift in production focus from a community-driven project thought of in relation to CVF's

other ‘participatory video productions’, to ‘Hollywood’ quality filmmaking with an eye on international distribution. While Cavallo was openly critical of the pilot episodes, he saw in the Wazi project the budget and opportunity to produce not ten low quality episodes for a television series, but one high quality feature length production which could be suitable for international distribution.

Rethinking Audience and Ambition

This shift in focus from the ‘local’ to the ‘international’ was in part signalled by a shift of the filmic canon in relation to which Wazi was imagined. The pilot episodes were generally discussed in relation to CVF’s other ‘participatory’ work, such as *Hadithi ya Uamzi* (2011) and *Kuwa Rada* (2011). These films used local community actors to help write scripts and conceptualise stories about ‘social issues’ such as the importance of education, and the dangers of HIV. Argenti, who led the production of the pilots, is on her own account an ‘activist filmmaker’ whose passion is education through participatory video, and is more interested in content than the style of that content (Argenti, *personal conversation*, 14 February 2013). However, during the review of the pilot episodes, filmic references shifted to Amirah and Wafa Tajdin’s atmospheric short film *His To Keep* (2013), David Gitonga’s fast-paced and violent *Nairobi Half Life* (2012), Spike Lee’s *Do the Right Thing* (1989), Lars von Trier’s highly stylised set-piece *Dogville* (2003), and the US-based television show *Homeland* (2011 – 2013), productions which were seen as offering an audiovisual quality aimed at international consumption. These latter films resonated with what CVF producer Cavallo saw as the opportunity to “score a goal” (*production meeting*, 27 May 2013), and produce something that would not only lead toward more funding for independent film production, but the recognition of CVF as a significant player in Kenyan film production.

Interestingly this shift from thinking of Wazi as a participatory community led project, to thinking of it as a film for an ‘international’ audience was not at the expense of the primary beneficiary audience of Wazi being thought of as Kenyan. During a discussion between Alessandra Argenti and the show’s Kenyan scriptwriter JC Niala, Argenti was unequivocal that the first audiences for the production were “Kenyans and Africans”, a statement based

primarily on the fact that the funder's "interest is in Kenya" and to "create awareness for refugees and [...] peaceful living among Kenyans" (Argenti, *production meeting*, 27 May 2013). This investment in a perceived 'Kenyan viewer' spoke to the mandate of facilitating partner CISP, whose primary goal was to provide public service information and raise awareness of the challenges facing urban refugees, wrapped within an accessible popular television production (Ferracciolo, *personal interview*, 21 May 2013). As such, the proposed change driving Wazi might be better thought of not as a move from national Kenyan to international distribution, but rather as the stylistic 'internationalisation' of content for a Kenyan audience. This somewhat contrary position in relation to Cavallo's desire to 'score a goal' indicated a particular conflation between a local 'Kenyan' and the 'international' orientation demonstrated by the production. This contradictory bringing together of the culturally located on the one hand, and a culturally dislocated on the other; of both local 'impact' and international 'success', alludes to some of the broader and more subtle discourses at work behind Wazi. Much as international development treats synecdochically the everyday lives of human beings and their abstract 'humanity', the production conversations preceding Wazi brought together the specificity of a Kenyan cultural context and an international cinema culture as imagined through international film festivals and modern urban audiences, resulting in new formation of the 'cultural' in which the distinctions between the Kenyan and the non-Kenyan, the national and the international, the local and the global, have collapsed.

Defining a resistance to an 'NGO Rhetoric'

One central antagonism in the formation of Wazi as a particular cultural product was the identification in the pilot episodes of an underlying correspondence to an 'NGO rhetoric'. Reference to this 'rhetoric' was used to loosely signify the mode of overly direct, message-based media production perceived as symptomatic of cause-based NGO-funded film production. Several scenes in the pilot episodes were drawn upon as symptomatic of this 'NGO' approach. In one such scene, Kevo talks with his Kenyan friend Samaki in a local bar while a news report about the war in Somalia runs in the background:

SAMAKI
(We will beat those somalis) Tutawavaa hao wasomali!

KEVO
(No good ever comes out of war.) Hakuna kitu poa hutokea kwa war

SAMAKI
(They are the ones who as (sic.) made Kenya so unsafe with their weapons and refugees!) Hao ndio wamedoo kenya ikakuwa unsafe ju ya hizo silaha zao na wakimbizi.

KEVO
(Refugees are people too.) Marefugee pia ni wasee.

SAMAKI
(Taking all our resources.) Wanakwachu mali yetu.

KEVO
(Did you know a million dollars is traded on the streets of eastleigh everyday?) Unamesea dola mita moja inazunguka kwa streets huko eastleigh daily?

SAMAKI
(Exactly! Do Kenyans ever get to see any of that money?) Ndiyo!na wakeiyo wanaguzanga hiyo doh?

KEVO
(There are Kenyan Somalis too you know) Kuna wakeiyo wasomali pia si unamesea.

SAMAKI
(All Somalis are the same.) Wasomali wote ni sawa.

Wazi? Pilot, Episode 3, Scene 6

Kevo here voices the conscientious response to hatred and xenophobia captured in his mild protestation, “Marefugee pia ni wasee”. Where questions of the economic contribution of refugee communities are hinted at, as well as broader issues of insecurity and popular rumours of a Somali-driven arms market, this engagement is quickly undermined by

Samaki's parabolic hatred, which is in turn met by Kevo's meek retreat to the blanket statement that 'not all Somalis are bad'. Similarly, in an antipodal scene, Momo sits with a group of young Somali men, considering the fate of the recently arrested Kevo:

> MOMO
> (I should have helped Kevo) Waxay aheed in aan caawiyo Kevo.
>
> HASSAN
> (Don't be stupid MoMo, we are not in Somalia) Dabaal ha iska dhigin anaga soomaaliya majoogni!
>
> MOMO
> (But he's my) Lakiin waa
>
> MoMo pauses before he says the word friend. It is clear to him that his friends will think he is crazy if he says that. He gathers his thoughts and is about to start again when he is interrupted.
>
> JAMAL
> (Tell me one Kenyan you know who has done anything to help refugees) Iisheeg qof kenyaan ah oo cawiyey Qaxooti
>
> MoMo is about to protest but his friends are in full flow now, each rushing over the other to get their point heard.
>
> MOMO
> (But..) Laakine..
>
> HASSAN
> (Why risk danger to help an Adon who won't help you!) maxaad Qatar aad u galineysaa naftaada addonkaan dartiisa kaasoo aan ku caawin doonin berito
>
> MOMO
> (But...) Laakine…
>
> JAMAL
> (It's his country and his rules, let his people sort him out) Waa wadankiisa iyo shircigiisa marka u dhaaf dad kiisa haka taxdiree.
>
> *Wazi?* Pilot, Episode 1, Scene 12

These scenes, considered in relation to discussions on the show's NGO approach, construct a view of the divided social and cultural worlds of Somalis and Kenyans living in Nairobi, a division which the friendship between Momo and Kevo sought to bridge. They were seen as offering little more than the imperative statement that friendship should overcome hatred.

The way that this message-based style – seen to espouse a particularly 'NGO' approach to narrating social and cultural issues – was conceptualised at the reevaluation phase was fairly nuanced, often drawing on several different referents and contexts. In particular, the NGO approach was articulated in relation to discussions on how the Wazi production needed to be more realistic, with more focus on what Cavallo called "real brutality", and in a way that Argenti referred to as having "less filters" (*production meeting*, 27 May 2013). This identification of an NGO rhetoric was in this way situated in relation to judgments about the constitution of the 'reality' of Somali life in Nairobi. Problematically, what this reality was and how it was to be worked with was never particularly clear, and increasingly became a point of miscommunication between Cavallo and scriptwriter JC Niala.

In drawing out and explaining what he understood as the reality of Somali life in Nairobi, Cavallo suggested the production deal with urban refugees as they appear "in the media" (*production meeting*, 27 May 2013), a statement used in the context of a discussion on the themes of police brutality, urban violence, and terrorism. The distinction that emerged here was between how NGOs understood the issues of Somalis and urban refugees – in terms of increasing awareness, and promoting social integration and 'peaceful living' amongst Kenyans – and how Somalis were understood by Kenyans, as demonstrated within public political discourse in mainstream media. Instead of a story about an urban refugee football team and two friends using their mutual love of music to demonstrate how '"refugees are people too" (*Wazi? Pilot*, Episode 3 Scene 6), what emerged was an impetus amongst producers to reinvent the story to focus on a "Somali urban refugee hustler" (Cavallo, *production meeting*, 27 May 2013), while engaging with daily reality of brutalities such as murder, the terrorist networks of Eastleigh, and the police

rape of Somali women. JC Niala, while voicing a related concern about not "ticking the funder's boxes" (*production meeting*, 27 May 2013), however cautioned against what she saw as the risk of stereotyping Somalis evident in Cavallo's desire for 'real brutality'. Furthermore, Argenti noted that *Nairobi Half Life* (2012), which had become a key referent of how to make a successful 'Kenyan' film, "is not 'NGO', it is 'America'". The concept of the 'NGO' as a definitive coordinate within the field of cultural production in Nairobi became the counter-point for emerging identifications of north American film traditions, political realism and social stereotyping, hinting at a complex coordination between discourses on national cinemas, filmic style, and the appropriateness of identifications of what constitutes social and political reality. This discord – especially that between Cavallo and JC Niala – foreshadowed disagreements during the scriptwriting phase of Wazi, and mark the start of deeper divergences over the constitution of social and political reality in film.

Community and Filmed Space

The third point to become central during pilot episode reevaluation discussions was concerned explicitly with the definition of a 'community'. It was noted that the pilot episodes often depicted internal shots of the houses and living rooms of Somali and Kenyan families, jumping in a quick succession of scenes between the private spaces of different social groups, a technique which polarised the relationships between Somali and Kenyan communities in Nairobi. Cavallo commented how this style held the show back from developing a strong sense of how these communities were connected, and what they shared. Resisting this insularity, and related to parallel changes in how the production should constitute its representations of social reality, there emerged an argument toward the end of this re-evaluative phase about the particularities of Eastleigh as a neighbourhood, and the narrative possibilities opened when representing this neighbourhood with reference to its special political and cultural location as Nairobi's 'little Mogadishu'. In thinking through this notion of 'community', one of Cavallo's recurrent points of reference was Spike Lee's *Do The Right Thing* (1989), raised as an example of a film based on stories drawn from the relationships found in a particular community, and on a particular street. What *Do The Right Thing* (1989) demonstrated for Cavallo was a strong

sense of place and location that the pilot episodes lacked and which was judged as important to engaging seriously with urban refugee life in Nairobi.

There was a turn here toward questions of how the communities of Eastleigh might relate to narratives about the 'brutalities' of the everyday lives of Nairobi's urban refugee populations. In this transformation the production therefore sought to turn away from a simplistic gesturing toward 'Somali/Kenyan issues', and to locate these issues within a more specific audiovisual language. The questions that this transition therefore raises is what kind of specificity and what kind of location is produced, on what grounds, by whom, in what ways, and for which imagined audiences? There was to be no easy answer to these questions, as the very notion of community and its constitution as the basis for a 'social reality', what this reality was and how it was understood, was to become one of the central contentions between JC Niala and Vincenzo Cavallo during the production's scriptwriting phase. Along with the change in the ambition of the project to approach an international film standard, an emergent resistance to an NGO rhetoric, and corresponding understandings of what the 'real' problems facing urban refugees are, the need for 'community' was a significant driving force in the reimagining of the Wazi production.

This series of contentions marks the initial terms of transformation of the Wazi production, and serves as a guideline for the term of future conflicts and discussions. These shifts in how the 'issue' of urban refugees is conceptualised in relation to its audiovisual representation might be usefully thought of as shift in the order of a discourse – that is to say, *discursive shifts* – in which the key referents of the production – 'Nairobi', 'refugee', 'community', 'NGO', 'Somalia', and so forth – were positioned and then repositioned in relation to different social and cultural frameworks. What emerged in this early stage of the production was a question regarding how Somali lives in Nairobi were to be made meaningful through an audiovisual production, the kinds of meanings and sorts of lives on which it was worth focusing. Furthermore, discussions emerged regarding the politics of a production's position in relation to other elements of Nairobi's cultural field: its reference to cultural and social development funding, as well as questions of establishing a stylistic

dialogue with national audiovisual traditions. It serves to mention here that what followed were subsequent disagreements, divergences, and re-imaginations of the production from the perspective of its various facilitators. What was at stake in these pre-production phases, therefore, was more than simple disagreements about the meanings of particular scenes, but far larger issues of how the film was to be made meaningful, what kind of world it envisioned and accordingly, what version of 'development' it espoused.

(Re:)Writing *Wazi?FM*: the scripting of social reality

Following this period of reevaluation, the Wazi production team and funders decided to move forward with Wazi while reimagining the project in a series of ways that more-or-less reflected the antagonisms that emerged from reviews of the pilot episodes. In addition to accepting a shift from *Wazi?* the television series to *Wazi?FM* the feature film, CISP requested that the new feature film keep certain scenes from the pilot episodes in the final production, so that it might be demonstrated to the EU that their initial investment in the pilots was not wasted, but rather part of a continuity in the same project. Given this request, and budgetary constraints which forced a more cautious approach to how to actually undertake the production of a feature film, Alessandra Argenti proposed three aspects to be considered in the feature film's new direction:

> 1) how to best fit the existing script in this low budget, by reducing the locations as much as possible in order to film the whole film in the same close neighbourhood and in max 15 days;
> 2) change direction and do something really experimental, something like "Dogville": all filmed inside a warehouse with a nice scenography like if it was a theatre;
> 3) use some parts of the 3 episodes we've already filmed, so that something like 30min can be used in the TV film and cut down the costs.
>
> Argenti, *production communication*, 27 July 2013

Each of Argenti's points reflect a need to reduce the production cost of Wazi, suggesting the limitation of the use of complex sets and locations, the recycling of existing footage taken from the pilot episodes, and the potential use of the theatrical conceit of a closed set. Implicit in these suggestions was a step away from filming outdoors, and reducing scenes of neighbourhoods, streets, and establishing shots of Nairobi's urban sprawl, all which have

high production and license costs.[29] However during the review of the pilot episodes it was commented that Wazi should avoid an overuse of domestic scenes and attempt instead to establish a sense of a broader urban community. This mismatch between budget and ambition meant that while external shots were to be limited, this was not to be done at the expense of the film's engagement with urban refugee communities in Nairobi. It was rather taken as an opportunity to further empower this engagement, as Argenti suggests in her reference to the "experimental" approach of von Trier's *Dogville* (2003), through the careful construction of sets to reflect – rather than avoid – broader societal relationships.

Unconvinced by the pilots' narrative of Momo and Kevo's shared dream of hip-hop fame overthrowing the bonds of xenophobia, and driven by this need to reduce costs while not compromising on story, Cavallo proposed the idea of staging the whole film production around a radio station, rather than focusing on the lives of actual musicians. This decision was driven by several considerations, not the least of which were related to production logistics. It was argued that a simple radio station would be an affordable set to build. It was furthermore suggested that the set might be later re-appropriated by CVF for other projects. The idea was even floated of creating an actual functional radio station, and potentially launching a "Wazi? FM" station on the back of promotion for the finished film. While this plan never materialised – the radio station set never became fully operational – it suggested a re-capitalisation of the film budget into parenthetical projects that was to become important in how CVF imagined the film as an opportunity to increase its own organisational profile. More significantly however, by constructing the film around an NGO-funded community radio station, the film would be able to reflect some of the complications surrounding the role of NGOs that engage with Somali/Kenyan issues in Nairobi. In this way, CVF enabled themselves to position NGOs as a central component in the social and political dynamics of Eastleigh, rather than as ethical and apolitical organisations sitting somehow outside of the communities within which they work. Here then CVF found a form

[29] Local regional council, Nairobi City Council, and Kenyan governmental licenses are all required for filming in public spaces in Nairobi. Lighting, transportation, and issues with ambient noise were also referenced as a disincentive to filming in public.

of resistance to the 'NGO rhetoric' which was so resolutely rejected in their pilot episodes, in making NGOs themselves objects of the film's cultural analysis and critique.

Following from the reevaluation of the pilot episodes, JC Niala produced a new rough draft script for *Wazi?FM* throughout June 2013. While CVF offered for me to assist Niala throughout the drafting process, she elected to produce a full rough draft first upon which we were to work together for subsequent revisions. Although Niala had finished this first draft by early July 2013, due to delays in the availability of funding from CISP while new contractual terms were negotiated with CVF, as well as bureaucratic delays with the processing of an application for a project deadline extension from the EU, Niala did not hand over this first rough draft of the script until mid-August 2013. The re-writing process which followed, under the considerable stress of now very tight time constraints, and during which I worked as Niala's Assistant Scriptwriter, took place between August and September 2013. It was during this period of writing that various conflicts emerged between the direction of the production and the script, organised broadly around differences regarding how the 'social reality' of the film and its political message should be represented. Through an iterative process of developing a script 'treatment'[30], rewriting scenes, re-developing a new treatment, and so on, the production was gradually taken from a community drama about love, romance and friendship, and re-imagined as a tense thriller about community radio activism, abusive police officers in Eastleigh, and the interrogation of a terror suspect's family by an ex-Kenyan defence forces investigator.

Scriptwriting as Practice

In order to describe the practices which drove this period of transformation, 'scriptwriting' will need to be theoretically located as a production-related practice, rather than its more traditional identification as a 'process' of a film's pre-production phase.Thinking about scriptwriting as an object of analysis in the study of a media production poses some unique challenges. Notably, the process of scriptwriting involves both collaborative as well as

[30] A 'script treatment' is a scene-by-scene outline of the script's major plot points. The Wazi treatments included short summaries of the important details of each scene, including key plot points, locations, a note on any necessary props, and a list of present characters, and notes on their motivations. We used these treatments as an 'informal' place in which to suggest new dialogue ideas or script changes, which could then be reviewed before being circulated.

isolated moments of work. During instances of collaboration JC Niala and I would meet at her office in Nairobi's affluent Lavington neighbourhood, sit in front of an instance of Celtx script editor on her computer and spend long days working through various drafts. This work would largely involve readings of the script, discussing Niala's ideas for new scenes and relationships or how existing scenes might be updated, and writing up script treatments for submission to CVF for approval.

My role in this process, as had been established by Cavallo in the early production meeting of 27 May 2013, was to work as a liaison between the production team and the scriptwriter, informing the writing with what was expected by CVF. In this sense, the practice of collaborating on writing the script for Wazi required a particular re-enactment on my part of a producer, and occasionally donor, while working to guide the script in an apparently agreed yet evidently changeable direction. These moments of collaborative scriptwriting therefore take on a formation similar to what Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin calls a 'dialogue', in which language is seen as in perpetual conversation with preceding ideas while in the very process of forming future ones (1981). Importantly, Bakhtin distinguishes this 'dialogic function' from a dialectical one, highlighting that a dialectic between two ideological perspectives privileges a compromised middle ground that seeks analytical closure from a dislocation between speakers, while a dialogue does not seek closure but remains unfinalised, open, and ongoing.

To define the production-related practice of scriptwriting as dialectical would require the positive identification of the desires, intentions and meanings of all agents involved in this process. However such positive identifications resisted easy definition – as the preliminary period of re-evaluation of the pilot episodes revealed, producers and funders operated with heterogeneous and changeable ideas of the role that 'culture' was seen to take in the constitution of social and political reality, with reference to different filmic canons, judgments of audiovisual quality, and of the political and testimonial role that film might take in the context of a 'development' project. Such a dialogue works with, rather than attempts to reduce, this changeability. The practice of scriptwriting so conceived becomes a dialogue

between ways of imagining and interpreting the imaginations of others, in formulating agreements on the representations of the life and 'issues' of Somali urban refugees in Nairobi, negotiating these ideas with those to which it responds, and those others that it anticipates.

Isolated periods of writing took a slightly different dialogical function to this sense of collaborative conversation. Rather than discussing and arguing through details of the script with Niala directly, voicing the expectations of CISP or CVF and attempting to synthesise Niala's perspective on scriptwriting with my interpretation of the requirements of the production group, these periods of isolation instead involved acts of remembering and re-imagining outside of the context of ongoing discussions over style or narrative structure. In such periods of isolated writing, I was asked to either write-up or edit those scenes which Niala had judged I had a clearer understanding of than she did. I was also asked to expand upon or update script treatments with various scene and character changes. The relation here between myself and the script operated at the level of my adaptation of characters and situations that were already written into new contexts; to empathise with Somali women and better depict their feelings; to consider what a Kenyan man might say when confronted with the xenophobic hatred of his friends; to anticipate how a Somali man might respond to being betrayed by his son. This dialogue between myself and the script was inflected with the recollection of past and ongoing conversations with funders, producers, and JC Niala, and the remarkable absence of the Somali and Kenyan people whose lives I was seeking to imagine. It was during these periods of isolated work that I found my own perspectives and interests entering into the script, at times overwriting my re-enactment of Wazi's producers. While preproduction 're-enactment' had so far been an effort of intellectual engagement during production meetings that involved little more than working under the direction of the head of the project, the 'creative' practice of scriptwriting opened far more complex issues about what it means to 're-enact' the creation of something 'new'.

Scriptwriting – whether collaborative or isolated – is therefore not treated here as a habitual, repetitive action that conforms to established professional norms. To define it as

such would be to sanitise the contingencies and messiness that surrounded the process. However, the process equally cannot be conceptualised only in terms of these contingencies themselves, as to do so would be to ignore the very real agreements, assumptions, and seemingly shared understandings amongst Niala, Cavallo and Argenti which the script sought to negotiate. Instead, therefore, scriptwriting is theorised here as a production-related practice in so far as it is a practice that seeks to create coherence from the variances amongst different agents involved with the production. In doing so, it precisely highlights the frictions, discord and essential lack of coherence within the production, all the while seeking to reduce this discord into a single and coherent articulation. The production-related practice of scriptwriting is taken, therefore, as related to practices of disagreeing, misunderstanding, re-imagining, restructuring, and so forth. What I seek to study, by studying scriptwriting, is therefore the complex conditions for the possibility of articulation within a context of changeable discord and difference.

This points towards an important contradiction in the concept of the dialogical practice of scriptwriting that is worth pointing out here: that while the practice might itself eschew closure, the final resulting script – and later, its corresponding film – marks the transformation from this dialogical openness into a closed, definitive product. The dialogical practice of scriptwriting eventually collapses, an agreement is met, and the contingency of the practices of producing are reduced into the articulate totality of the final product. By mapping out the transformations in the Wazi script, the intention here is to therefore provide the foundations for thinking about how the articulation of a 'cultural product' emerges from dialogues about its political, cultural, and social significances in the context of a development discourse.

1) The first rough draft: 'Urban Pirates' and expensive establishing shots

The first feature film script that I received from JC Niala for review focused on the relationship between two friends, Momo and Kevo, as they ran a community radio station promoting social cohesion in the Eastleigh neighbourhood of Nairobi. According to Niala's interpretation of the production's new direction, her script would aim at being something

"grittier but with minimal violence that looks at Momo through the lens of a man under pressure … Momo is caught between two worlds set to collide, which one will he choose?" (Niala, *personal communications*, 10 June 2013). The story of this first rough draft was focused around the relationship between Momo and Kevo's sister Sweetie.

The script opens with two police officers about to break into a community centre in Eastleigh, while Momo stands within, a mobile phone in one hand and an engagement ring in the other. The script then cuts to earlier that day, with Sweetie getting dressed after having just 'lost her virginity' to Momo, while outside Kenyan police raid Eastleigh as part of the anti-terrorist operations of October 2012. The couple then part ways that morning, and by design their paths do not cross again on screen. As the day unfolds, Sweetie learns that Momo's family has arranged a marriage for him with a well-off Somali family looking to 'marry-off' their 'troubled' daughter. Momo, trying to keep his relationship with Sweetie a secret from Kevo, rushes around Eastleigh trying and failing to get in touch with Sweetie. Despite his intention of marrying Sweetie, through a series of encounters with Somali relatives we learn that Momo is under a lot of pressure to accept his arranged Somali marriage. In the meantime Kevo, who works with Momo at the radio station Wazi? FM, learns that Momo had broken his sister's heart and builds himself up into a rage along with his friend Samaki. On this same day, Momo manages to get himself involved with a Somali gang called the 'Urban Pirates', and gets coerced into being the getaway driver while they kidnap the British head of a local NGO. The film's climax sees Kevo and Sweetie storm into Momo's engagement party in the hope of confronting him, while Momo gets implicated in a botched kidnapping attempt and gets chased down by the police. In the final scene, as Momo cowers inside an Eastleigh community centre while the police break in, we learn through the revelation of a love letter that Momo had in fact intended to marry Sweetie all along, and was only involved with the 'Urban Pirates' in order to raise the funds to rent them their first home together. Momo, in the end, had chosen his Kenyan life; as the urban pirate Ahmed put it: "He's practically one of them. When this gets out we don't want it to be said that the Urban Pirates are just another bunch of Somalis. They need to know that all Somalis everywhere are sick of this."

Drawing the lines of thought between this first draft of the Wazi script and the production discussions which had followed the review of the pilot episodes is not entirely possible without certain leaps of deductive imagination. This first incursion into structuring a feature film about Somali life in urban Kenya is based largely on Niala's interpretation of the problems that funders and producers had with the pilot episodes, and the clarification of their expectations during production meetings of late May 2013. In an initial review of this draft script, the main concern raised by CVF was the lack of narrative flow connecting the scenes, through which a sense of a 'Somali community' was supposed to emerge. Niala insisted that the film should fall on one single day, as doing so would give a sense of urgency and immediacy to the dramas that Momo was facing. Furthermore she commented that it was particularly important to her that Momo and Sweetie miss each other throughout the film like "ships in a mist", a technique that would allow the gradual building of tension around the central climactic revelation of Momo's true allegiance.

However, I commented at the time on the implausibility of having every conflict in Momo's life all occurring on the same day. This was a primary issue with Niala's inclusion of 'urban pirates'. I argued that it seemed highly unlikely to me that Momo – who we are to believe is a considerate, romantic young cultural activist living at a difficult crossroads as a Somali in Kenya – should choose the day of his Somali engagement party to both sleep with his Kenyan girlfriend, as well as take part in a kidnapping. On my reading the script, this did not seem to be a strategic use of absurdity or slapstick comedy, but instead the symptom of an implausibly designed story. As my notes from the time reveal, the 'urban pirate' scene was also unconvincingly written in comparison to other scenes more focused on community and friendship. The stilted dialogue resembled a north American crime drama cliche, and immediately raised the question of whether or not Somali 'terrorists' would actually speak with each other in this way. Raising these points to Niala she immediately agreed, revealing that she herself felt uncomfortable writing the scenes and had included them as an attempt to appease Cavallo's desire for a more violent, 'brutal' story about Nairobi's urban refugees.

The urban pirate scenes were cut in the following first script treatment. Yet the removal of the urban pirates left a narrative void in the plot which needed to be rethought. From discussions between Niala and myself about how to update the story without them, it emerged that Momo's involvement with the 'urban pirates' had two basic narrative functions. Firstly, it was the source of a moral ambiguity around Momo's character. Not only was Momo 'between worlds', but one of these worlds was a criminal Somali underworld; by design, Niala suggested, the viewer was to left guessing as to what kind of man Momo really was until the very end. Secondly, Momo's involvement with the kidnappers is what provided the narrative opening for his absence at his own engagement party, during which Kenyans Kevo, Samaki and Sweetie, and Momo's Somali family, come to climactic confrontation. Momo's involvement furthermore provided the premise for the police attack which opens and closes the film, with the police doing their lawful duty in pursuing a suspected kidnapper.

In order to replace these scenes in the first script treatment of 20 August 2013, it was decided that instead of Momo being complicit in criminal activity, he would simply get caught up in the panic that followed a grenade attack in Eastleigh, becoming wrongfully targeted by the police as a suspect while he was out looking for Sweetie. Interestingly, this decision shifted the focus of criminality outward, vindicating Momo while making the neighbourhood of Eastleigh the site of moral uncertainty. As such, 'terrorism' became a faceless entity, an ambiguous aspect of an Eastleigh backdrop. This move also criminalised the Kenyan police, making their action against Momo one of racial persecution rather than a morally defensible response to criminal activity.

2) CVF's Reply: Police Corruption and Momo's victimhood

In Cavallo's reply to Niala's *1st Wazi?FM Treatment*, he offered several logistical reflections on production cost regarding the liberal use of locations, 'Connecting Scenes' and 'Establishing Shots'. These included the limitation of external street shots. Primarily however, he offered thoughts on two major elements of the plot. The first was the role of the Wazi? FM radio station, which in Niala's first draft had been little more than an interesting

set. This radio station should instead be, in Cavallo's opinion, a divisive catalyst for "disturbance within the media sphere in Kenya" (Cavallo, *production communication*, 21 August 2013). As he goes on to ask, "where is all that tension between the radio, the donors, freedom of information?" (Cavallo, *production communication*, 21 August 2013). For Cavallo, the tensions to be encapsulated by the Wazi? FM station come from its particular role of "advocating for peace" (Cavallo, *production communication*, 21 August 2013) in an environment of police raids and grenade attacks.

It is for this reason, Cavallo suggested, that Momo and Kevo should therefore become accused of supporting terrorism as a way for the police to "find an acceptable reason to shut down the radio" (Cavallo, *production communication*, 21 August 2013). In this second and related comment, Cavallo suggested that the police more fully embody a state that does not want the advocacy of peace and cooperation between Kenya and Somalia. Following from CVF's input, and responding to the narrative shifts caused by the decision to remove the 'urban pirates' which saw Momo transfigured into a victim of circumstance, the roles of both Kevo and Momo were considerably re-drafted. It was decided in the *2nd Script Treatment* that the Wazi? FM radio station should play a more instrumental role in the Eastleigh neighbourhood, attracting the attention of a local policeman looking to cause trouble. Kevo was also to take a more divisive role in this dynamic, as somebody hungry for social justice. As such, Kevo was recast as a stronger social and political activist. Two scene extracts from the *2nd Script Treatment* depict this new relationship between Kevo, Momo, Wazi? FM and local authorities:

> Kevo and MoMo set up the arrangements for the day at Wazi? FM. MoMo feels that the light hearted approach that Kevo insists they take when talking about the police is not working anymore. He thinks that they should focus instead on more documentary type approaches to their work.
>
> Kevo feels that directly attacking the police will not help ‘their situation’. MoMo is not amused. It is not Kevo who risks being sent off to the camps. MoMo can disappear at any moment while Kevo would stil have his life.
>
> Kev thinks that MoMo is being ridiculous – they would never disappear MoMo besides the case was still at the high court and everyone knew that they could not all be forcibly moved to camps. (sic.)
>
> *Wazi?FM 2nd Treatment*, Scene 9, 23 August 2013

> "Their meeting [with Wazi?FM's donor] is interrupted. Policeman One has dropped in on a 'courtesy visit' just to see how you guys are doing? They recognize that he is fishing [for a bribe] and do their best to stay polite. The policeman turns up the pressure by asking MoMo for his papers. Everything is in order – policeman one reminds MoMo that he is a guest in Kenya. Guests should know how to behave. (sic.)
>
> *Wazi?FM 2nd Treatment*, Scene 20, 23 August 2013

In these scenes, Kevo has been given the character of an angry social activist, eager to capture the injustices that engulfed Eastleigh at the time while harnessing the power of the Wazi? FM radio station. Momo's reservations, on the other hand, spoke to the insecure position of Somalis at the time. The 'Policeman One' character however is cast as a simple opportunist, using the local unrest as a cover to extort money out of a vulnerable Somali. While this was seen as a step in the right direction, it was argued by Cavallo that the conflict between the radio station and the police could still make a stronger political point. Niala eventually reconsidered this relationship, and we rewrote the treatment in an attempt to make it clearer that the police were divisive parts of a politically motivated manipulation:

> "Kevo and MoMo set up the arrangements for the day at Wazi? FM. MoMo feels that the light hearted approach that Kevo insists they take when talking about the police is not working anymore. He thinks that they should focus instead on more documentary type approaches to their work.
>
> Surprisingly Kevo agrees – infact he has footage on the handycam that MoMo needs to watch. They watch the footage and Kevo is excitedly talking about ways in which it can be used to highlight the plight of urban refugees.
>
> MoMo is silent and withdrawn while watching it and eventually asks Kevo to switch it off. Kevo misses the point that this is MoMo's daily existence until MoMo points it out to him.
>
> 'Kevo – it's like even you didn't really believe me till you saw it for yourself.' 'It wasn't like that MoMo it's just'
> 'It's just what? What you've got here Kevo, it's important, its useful but if we don't use it properly it's just another Walolo problem. It can be equally turned against us.'
> Kevo guiltily admits that he was spotted by the police and it is very likely that they know he was filming. MoMo becomes incensed that he would bring the evidence to the station but as it is there they had to hide it.
>
> They hide the tape and are interrupted by a call from Camilla who works for Urban Refugee Action. She was planning on coming to the station today but is a bit concerned about the security in the area. Would she be safe?" (sic.)
>
> *Wazi?FM 3rd Treatment*, Scene 9, 23 August 2013

> "Chastened Camilla [representative of Wazi? FM's donors] is reminded that they 'need' each other and indeed outside of Eastands no one really seems to care about their plight. She uses inappropriate phrases like 'our situation'.

> ‘Perhaps the radio documentaries will catch the publics attention’
>
> She reminds them though that their case is being reviewed at the High Court and so not to ‘rock the boat’. Personal stories would be better received than political analysis of the situation.
>
> Policeman One swipes the door open not noticing Camilla storms in and shouts in Kiswahili ”Vijana -You have gone to far this time!” His storm causes Camilla to startle and Policeman one to quickly change his tone.
>
> ‘Just coming to check on my boys during these challenging times’
>
> Camilla is worried that she might get trapped in a riot but he insists that the police have everything under control. Camilla anxious to get out of Eastlands leaves promising to see what she can do about the funding and is followed shortly after the Policeman One who wants to make sure that she has gone.
>
> Policeman One then turns his attention to MoMo. He asks for MoMo’s papers and while holding them (it appears that everything is in order) ‘Your friend has something I want – give it to me now.’
>
> He continues to put pressure on MoMo while brushing aside Kevo’s attempts to help MoMo. Taking MoMo’s papers he gives them until the end of the day to produce the tape – or else." (sic.)
>
> *Wazi?FM 3rd Treatment*, Scene 20, 23 August 2013

The inclusion of 'the tape', on which Momo has captured Policeman One committing a crime, politicises the police persecution of Momo by turing Wazi? FM into a bastion of a 'freedom of press'. While not mentioned in any scripts (or the final film), throughout production it was generally agreed that this tape held footage of either police rape or beating of a Somali woman (and after the Westgate attack in September 2013, of the policeman taking bribes in exchange for illegal papers for future terrorists). This move, originally suggested by Cavallo, toward depicting a corrupt policeman using the October 2012 raids as a cover within which to exert pressure on a local Somali activist with proof of his corruption, initiated a further shift in the moral pivot of the script, moving first from Momo as a kidnapper, to Eastleigh as the location of terrorist activity, and finally to a Kenyan policeman as the abuser of human rights. This shift was matched by an inverse emergence of Momo’s ‘victimhood’, in which Momo is transformed from a perpetrator of random acts of abuse in the *1st Treatment*, to being positioned as a Somali scared to cause any trouble in the *2nd Treatment*, to the *3rd*

Treatment's positioning of Momo as an activist journalist persecuted for being Somali and targeted for capturing incriminating evidence of police corruption.

3) The 'smarter' story: less love, and more politics

The language with which Cavallo offered feedback to Niala on these first few treatments was encouraging, suggesting that even in early scripts we were "going in the right direction" (Cavallo, *production communication*, 22 August 2013). He was particularly excited by the potentially controversial introduction of a theme of police corruption into the story. There was a strong acceptance from Cavallo that he was not the production's scriptwriter and as such wanted to give Niala as much creative license as possible. An example of this would be Niala's inclusion of a 'chokora'[31] character in her first draft, a homeless garbage collector who repeatedly appears to Momo as he moves through Eastleigh. The chokora, a "self styled rubbish man" who "has not been taken in the raids as he appears to be part of the collective disorder in the streets" (*Wazi?FM first draft*, scene 9), interrupts Momo several times to offer a break in the narrative, giving Momo an opportunity to pause and reflect. Niala then decided to cut the chokora character from the *2nd Treatment*, on the grounds that she was unclear as to the function he was serving. Cavallo lamented this decision, commenting that "I kind of missed him in a way", yet went on to clarify that "in any case it is your choice to keep it or not" (*production communication*, 22 August 2013).

However, despite this display of neutrality toward certain narrative and creative decisions from Niala, Cavallo's interest in making a strongly political film set around a disruptive community radio station nevertheless started to upset Niala's concept of a Somali community focused drama. In his reflections on the *3rd Treatment*, Cavallo commented that he felt the story should be "smarter", and that in its current formation it "didn't make sense" (*production communication*, 23 August 2013). Niala understood this in the context of establishing what she saw as an interesting story of a young Somali man "caught between two worlds", in a romantic drama focused around Momo's divided love life. In an attempt to

[31] This Swahili term, which literally means 'cursed', refers to a homeless youth struggling to survive without the support of a family, relying on petty crime and occasional informal labor.

make the story ‘smarter’, Niala and I worked for several days to iron out inconsistencies in the script, choosing to focus primarily on small details like why Momo wasn’t able to simply phone Sweetie, instead of rushing around Eastleigh looking for her. Various convenient situations were developed, in which Momo looses his phone, and explanations offered for why he couldn’t borrow one from a friend. These minor adjustments were done in an effort to make the existing story, of Momo and his conflicted love life, work as a neater and ‘smarter’ narrative.

Cavallo responded to these changes with an exasperation that Niala did not seem to fully comprehend. What Niala and Cavallo seemed to not properly communicate was that the ‘smartness’ to which Cavallo was referring seemed to indicate not only a lack of logical cohesion within the motivations of the script’s characters, but within the entire narrative focus of the story. As he pointed out, the script should be “more a thriller without of course killing the love story … what is really central is the political situation, the human rights violations, the injustices” (Cavallo, *production communication*, 23 August 2013). Certain politicisations of the script had established within the *3rd Treatment,* such as the inclusion of a corrupt policeman and the accentuation of Kevo’s political activism, however Momo’s character still remained, in Cavallo’s opinion, a weak and disinterested character: “his world is burning around him, and it’s like he does not care about anything” (Cavallo, *personal conversation*, 22 August 2013). The ‘smartness’ to Cavallo seemed to come instead from a desire to establish a new way of thinking about the political questions that he saw as central to the role of Eastleigh within a broader sociopolitical environment of Nairobi, as a story in which Somali communities fought for self determination. Central to the miscommunication between Cavallo and Niala seemed to be the fact that, for Niala, the political centre of the story lay elsewhere. To Niala it was the relationships between individual Somalis and individual Kenyans, and in particular the love triangle between Sweetie, Momo and Momo’s arranged Somali wife, that served as a political nexus for the exploration of the tensions between these two communities.

This difference in Cavallo and Niala's approaches germinated into a tension between the pair, with Niala telling me – after Cavallo's rejection of the weak Momo of the *3rd Treatment* – that she had no idea what Cavallo actually wanted. Growing frustrated with the process of working on a Wazi script that he saw as being too overly focused on the romantic relationship between Momo and Sweetie, Cavallo decided that what was needed was an entirely new concept for the film. Through a telephone conversation on 24 August 2013, Cavallo offered Niala a different narrative approach which would shift the film's centre from community romance, to political thriller.

4) From Drama to Social Testimony: the making of a forensic crime thriller

Cavallo's proposal was to have Wazi based around an interrogation of a Somali community by the Kenyan authorities for their possible involvement in a terrorist attack in Eastleigh, which was to provide the foregrounding for the community drama. This new concept was taken onboard and reworked by myself and Niala on 24 and 25 August 2013 into a new script treatment that Niala entitled 'Remembering Wazi? FM' (26 August 2013). While Niala's original script presented a linear story of Momo moving through Eastleigh on a journey of self-discovery, Cavallo's new concept spilt the story into two separate timeframes. The 'past', composed primarily of scenes from Niala's preceding script, tells the story of Momo and Kevo capturing footage of a corrupt policeman, running a radio station, and Momo navigating his love life. However these scenes were now to be illuminated from the perspective of characters from Momo's life, speaking from the 'present-day' while being interrogated by an "Investigative Psychologist" working for the Kenyan police. Momo himself has been arrested by the police on suspicion of involvement in an Eastleigh grenade attack five days earlier. The introduction to the treatment clarifies:

> We never see the Investigative Psychologist until the very end of the film but we can hear his deep voice, the voice of an old wise man. The film is shot from his point of view as he interacts with and asks everyone questions. We are left with pictures of different MoMos.
>
> *Remembering Wazi? FM*, 26 August 2013

If Niala's first few treatments of Wazi might be thought of as more-or-less a continuation of the work she was doing in the pilot episodes, with a focus on community and a question of

love and friendship overcoming fear and xenophobia, then Cavallo's *Remembering Wazi? FM* treatment closer represent a follow up on Argenti's reference to a 'Dogville' style dramatic theatricalisation through film. The interview scenes were to "take place in a black room (a surreal space out of everything, only black walls, a desk a light)" (*Remembering Wazi? FM - Cavallo's Notes,* 26 August 2013). The film was envisioned as minimalistic, with scenes of Momo's life punctuated by close-up shots of front lit interviewees sitting in a dark room. The key intervention of this new version of the script was the shifting of location of suspense away from the question of *which* life Momo will choose, toward the question of w*ho* Momo is:

> In the end it is left for the audience/ interviewer to decide. Who is MoMo? Is he a cold and calculating terrorist simply because he clearly lied to his family and hid things from those that he loved?
>
> The truth will be revealed only at the end by a small detail that will suggest the audience what could have been the reality behind this attack. (sic.)
>
> *Remembering Wazi? FM*, 26 August 2013

While Niala's original treatment constructed two worlds, of the Somali family and the Kenyan family, Cavallo's intervention introduced the third vital identity of the 'terrorist', a position located somehow outside of the ethical norms of Somali and Kenyan society. Momo's character – as a Somali activist living within Kenyan society – was therefore made the locus of narrative suspense. Yet Wazi's funding facilitator CISP had expressly requested that the production avoid the issue of terrorism, and in particular avoid depictions of physical violence or acts of terror. Marcella Ferracciolo had expressed concern with Niala's first treatment's use of 'urban pirates' and scenes of kidnapping, commenting that such things did not fit with the kind of film CISP wanted to produce. However, while the *Remembering Wazi? FM* treatment brought questions of terrorism to the foreground of the film, this was presented to CISP as an engagement with public perceptions of terrorism and Somali life, rather than the gratuitous use of terrorism for dramatic effect. As the *Remembering Wazi? FM* treatment pointed out, the audience was intended to empathise with the Investigative Psychologist, and follow his ethical line of questioning into who Momo was. It is, at the end of this new treatment, the Investigative Psychologist who uncovers the corrupt policeman's involvement with the radio station Wazi? FM, and who leads us to

identifying Momo not as a terrorist, but a political activist standing up against police corruption. In this sense the inclusion of terrorism was not simply a strategy for generating narrative suspense. Instead terrorism became a technique through which Wazi could confront viewers with mainstream misconceptions about Somalis in Kenya, and then narratively lead these viewers – along with the Police investigator – to overcome their own bias.

While the changes to the production were significant at the level of scene structure and visual style, they were their most profound in terms of the production's implied political/ epistemological regime. Specifically, this transformation in the script marked a shift away from a focus on interpersonal relationships between two conflicting communities, toward the representation of a community as enveloped in a protective deception, only to be later revealed by acts of social testimony. Where the questions posed in Niala's original script focused on Momo's personal choice and his conflictual identity crisis as both a modern Kenyan and a Somali refugee, the investigation at the heart of *Remembering Wazi? FM* sought instead to figure out 'the truth' behind Momo's involvement or lack of involvement with terrorism.

5) A community of victims, or of co-conspirators?

This change in direction was followed by several days work, during which Niala and myself intensely restructured the film's scenes, rewriting of dialogue that now involved an Investigative Psychologist, and reconfiguring overarching issues within the script, such as concerns with character motivations, movements and prop consistency within what had now become expositional 'flashback' scenes. While Momo was supposedly in police custody on suspicion of taking part in a terrorist attack, his family were interrogated about his whereabouts. They recall Momo's movements, gradually unraveling the story of Momo's arranged marriage. It is in relation to the retelling and recounting of their stories about Momo that characters represent Momo to the viewer. Kevo, having learnt that Momo had seemingly betrayed his sister, turns on Momo and slanders his personality to the Investigator. Sweetie, Kevo's slighted sister, was cast as an innocent victim, confused and

Fig. 3.5 – Still from the final production of *Wazi?FM*. Ibrahim, Momo's father, is interviewed by the investigator about his son's activities. Copyright CVF/CISP, 2014.

Fig. 3.6 – Still from the final production of *Wazi?FM*. Maryam, Momo's mother, is interviewed by the police investigator. Copyright CVF/CISP, 2014.

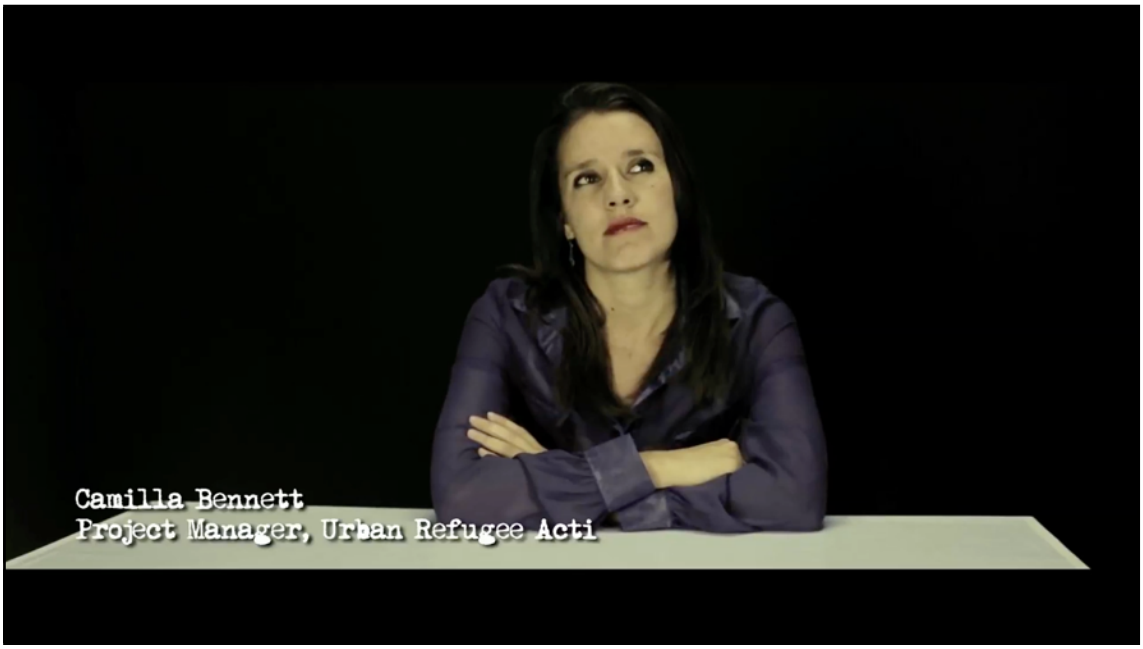

Fig. 3.7 – Still from the final production of *Wazi?FM*. Camilla, the NGO worker who manages the Wazi? FM radio project, reflects on her experiences. Copyright CVF/CISP, 2014.

Fig. 3.8 – Still from the final production of *Wazi?FM*. The corrupt policeman threatens Momo during a 'flashback' scene. Copyright CVF/CISP, 2014.

tearful during her interview scenes. The community eventually testify to Momo's whereabouts and actions, and gradually the Investigator realises that a corrupt policeman had framed Momo as a terrorist in order to prevent him from releasing incriminating evidence.

Niala seemed generally content to work on this new script without any major adjustments. However Cavallo was still unhappy with the story. While the investigator exonerates Momo and captures a corrupt policeman, the background story – which had largely followed unchanged from earlier drafts – no longer made any sense to him. The intrigue of Momo's love life had been lost amongst his internment and possible involvement in a terrorist attack. Furthermore, as Cavallo noted, it made no sense that Momo was "such a bastard to his whole community" by sleeping around, lying, and avoiding his arranged marriage, all while supposedly being a community-based political activist (Cavallo, *personal communication*, 23 August 2013). A series of small changes followed which sought to gradually realign the background story of Momo's romance with the suspenseful thriller about his arrest. Key amongst these changes was the idea, offered by Niala, that Momo has not actually been arrested. Instead, his whereabouts could be left largely unknown throughout the film. It would be revealed at the end of the film that he had in fact gone into hiding. The Investigator, in parallel to ascertaining Momo's guilt, was now also attempting to *locate* Momo. The script here moved from questions about *who* Momo is, to the question of *where* he was. The implication of this change to Cavallo, in keeping with his generally observable tendency to overtly politicise characters and scenarios in the script, seemed to be that the members of the Somali and Kenyan communities interviewed would then no longer just be telling the story of Momo's last days before his arrest, but would instead be 'co-conspirators' with Momo's escape.

In this final round of drafting, the community – both Kenyan and Somali – work together in order to deceive the Investigative Psychologist, presenting a complex lie about an arranged marriage in order to buy Momo time to escape. In this version Kevo pretends to be angry at Momo for slighting his sister, and uses this anger to distance both himself and his sister

from police suspicion. In reality however, Kevo and Momo are working together to safely reveal incriminating evidence about police corruption to the public without putting their communities at risk of reprisal. In the film's final scene we see Momo on a bus leaving the city while Kevo sits at an internet cafe somewhere in downtown Nairobi, uploading the incriminating evidence to Youtube.

This shift in story seemingly relocated the ethical paradigm of the story, implicating new value judgments on the worth and rights of human life and the definition of its politics. These rights, in particular of freedom of association and freedom of expression, are valorised through the actions of both the Kenyan and Somali community and of activists Momo and Kevo, juxtaposed with the criminality of the corrupt policeman and the xenophobic and racial bias which assumed Momo's guilt. These two 'beneficiary' communities were no longer brought together by a star-crossed love between Momo and Sweetie, but in an act of unification against the common enemy of individual corruption. In this then we start to see the formation of the modernist mythology that comes to define the final film production – the film's vision of the 'grassroots activist' fighting for a shared humanity, and two communities separated in society united in the shared rejection of police corruption and xenophobia, and of the activist fighting against the state. Considering the Wazi project took as one of its important points of departure the rejection of the 'NGO rhetoric' rife in the Wazi pilot episodes, it is notable how many of the sentiments of this original position remained unchanged, imparting that common lesson that human compassion and community action can somehow trump complex political circumstance.

Within the process of writing the Wazi script, the moral and proselytising discourse of the NGO can be seen to have partly – and imperfectly – 'clawed back' the dissenting discourse that sought to reject 'NGO rhetoric' by appealing instead to an alternative vision of 'social reality'. This notion of 'clawback' is put forth by media scholar John Fiske (1987) in his work on television news broadcasting, in which he introduces the term as a way to describe those techniques with which newscasters attempt to force news stories that subvert their narrative norms to operate within their dominant discursive parameters. That is to say,

news events which fail to immediately conform to the visions of the world that news broadcasters wish to espouse are re-framed such that they are conducive to, rather than disruptive of, a broadcaster's discursive logic. From the pilot episodes through to the final version of the Wazi script, and despite the fundamental reorganisation of treatments of social, political and community interest, the lesson of *Wazi?FM* remains focused on the transcendent power of community and friendship in the face of hatred and corruption. Yet, in a very different sense to how Fiske uses the term, there was no 'agent' or single invested practitioner in Wazi diving this clawback; nobody was vested with the clear interests of fulfilling an NGO vision. Instead, it was the result of a dialogical transformation, drawn out across the practices through which the production was constituted. It can be seen that this clawback was also not entirely successful; the production remained significantly transformed from what its funders had initially set out to achieve.

This refection returns our attention to one of the initial questions that underpin this thesis: when, how and in what ways does funding have a relation to the content of what is produced culturally? This preceding analysis of Wazi might be seen as an exploration of this question. In the context of Wazi's production practices a dissenting anti-NGO discourse was not rooted in a social or political reality that sat *beyond* some dominant discourse on social relations, but rather came from *within* – as an internal rejection of an 'NGO rhetoric' by a media NGO itself funded by a series of other NGOs. The 'clawback' of developmentality within a project that sought to present itself as 'cultural' rather than 'developmental' therefore appears, in one sense, as the reaffirmation of development in the context of its own self-critique. The term 'NGO', failing to adequately signify any definite coordinate or set of coordinates within a social or political field, seems instead to have become an articulatory strategy for marking internal dissension within development discourse itself, drawing out the parameters for a 'different' sort of development – a form of development as a 'cultural' conversation rather than economically or socially driven change. The operation of the 'cultural' in Wazi – expressed in qualities such as the use of theatrical or dramatic conceits, the styles of cinematography, or the narrative fictionalisation of social reality – cannot therefore be seen to stand as entirely submissive to the totality of

developmental discourse, nor indeed as entirely disruptive to this logic. Rather, I would argue that a 'cultural' focus within development discourse makes possible the conditions for discursive antagonism, but it does not guarantee such antagonism. Personal interests, such as Cavallo's political activism, Niala's investment in ideas of social community and narrative drama, or Ferracolio's pacifism, overlap with development's articulations of political emancipation, human rights, or humanism in ways that make any clear distinction between the 'cultural' and the 'developmental' impossible. And it is in the dialogue between these positionalities that we might start to make sense of the situated and non-deterministic ways that funding – and *funders* – can be seen to have a discursive, rather than causal, relation to production.

Post-script, Pre-Westgate

One reading of the practices involved in writing Wazi might see the production's direction as having been gradually subsumed by Cavallo's interests in political activism. In many senses this was true. Cavallo's involvement in the scriptwriting process steadily increased, from an initial proclamation of Niala's creative freedom, to his taking a very strong lead in defining the narrative. In a final flurry of editing a few weeks before filming was scheduled to start, Cavallo and I sat in a waiting room at the RCK while delayed for an interview with a Somali rape victim for the IRIN documentary, and systematically worked through the entire script, re-writing several scenes to better reflect Cavallo's vision without Niala's involvement. Niala, who originally had a strong intention to make the film her own and not compromise on her vision for the story, gradually acquiesced to the point that she was accepted Cavallo's changes with little or no alteration. However, taking only this view on the relationship between Cavallo and Niala would be to remove from sight (and analysis) the dialogic interplay between their perspectives and the antagonisms that emerged between them over divergent concepts such as culture, romance, and politics, from which the final script was to gradually materialise. The transformation of Wazi from a television series about the unlikely musical partnership between a Kenyan and an urban refugee, into a community-focused romance, and finally an investigative crime thriller about terrorism,

might be more usefully thought of as the result of an iterative series of phone calls, emails, arguments, production meetings, and sessions of treatment rewriting and script rereading and reediting through which one particular discursive arrangement gradually came to dominate. Throughout this process, several ethical definitions could be seen to be at work in the project, such as the rightful role of community action, judgments about who should bear the moral burden of guilt and culpability, and what kind of 'unified' social world the final production should promote. By taking a practice-based approach toward studying the production-related practices through which such ideas were articulated, the intention here has been to open some of these dynamics to broader reflection within the context of the media/development nexus in Nairobi.

The process of scriptwriting brought the post-production of Wazi up to the first few weeks of September 2013, at which point there was at last a finished story approved by CVF and accepted, with a slight sense of resignation, by JC Niala. As the final script was being reviewed by CISP the construction of sets was underway and casting was in full swing. Then, the week before filming was scheduled to start, the precarious position of Somali urban refugees within Nairobi underwent a sudden and violent escalation. Around midday on 21 September 2013 all the large flat screen televisions at a local Nakumatt supermarket near which I was at a meeting with members from the Slum Film Festival flicked on to local news coverage. We gathered with shoppers and staff in the electronics section of the supermarket and watched as the news reported that shots had been fired at the upper-middle class Westgate shopping mall in Westlands. Reporters struggled to break the news amidst a general lack of information, initially intimating a group of armed 'thugs', then robbers, a gang of local criminals, and even random looters. What gradually unfolded was the four day siege of Westgate by armed militia from the southern Somali Islamist organisation Al-Shabaab, in what was to become one of Nairobi's most significant – and certainly most publicised – attacks on the city's civilian population.

After a few days of 'keeping low' in the Westlands area, CVF and CISP organised an emergency meeting on 25 September 2013, during which the sensitivity of the position of

Wazi within Kenya's rapidly changing political environment was reconsidered. The role of Westgate in disrupting the political discourse in Nairobi drew into strong relief those features of Wazi which had been naturalised within the production. Suddenly the role of Somali urban refugees in Kenya was not the exclusive concern of human rights activists and humanitarian groups, but became entwined with questions of national security and the 'global war' on Islamist extremism.

The following chapter will introduce in more detail 'Westgate' as both a political and cultural event in Nairobi, before presenting an account of the post-Westgate Wazi meetings. I will then endeavour to unpack the discursive formations that emerged from this moment of crisis within the human/cultural antagonism of which Wazi was part.

Chapter 4

Wazi and Westgate: Reconsidering the Human/Culture Antagonism

> There are two moments in Kenya: before Westgate, after Westgate. Everything changed.
> – Vincenzo Cavallo, *Emergency Production Meeting*, 25 September 2013

> The theme and the possibility of a total history begins to disappear, and we see the emergence of something very different that might be called a general history. … A total description draws all phenomena around a single centre – a principle, a meaning, a spirit, a world-view, an overall shape; a general history, on the contrary, would deploy the space of a dispersion.
> – Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1989): 9-10

This chapter considers the final pre-production stages of Wazi, which had been on the brink of going into production when armed militants from Al-Shabaab attacked and destroyed the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi. The attack brought Wazi's subject matter of Somali urban refugees and their social integration in Nairobi to the forefront of Kenyan political and popular attention. Through an emergency production meeting between the film's funders and producers, the fate of the Wazi project was debated, and arguments made for the total reworking of its plot and politics. While the practices of producing Wazi had so far been largely contained to the differences in styles and opinions at work amongst a limited number of people all struggling to influence a story about social integration and police violence, this production discourse was suddenly confronted with a far broader range of considerations: national security, international terrorism, national pride, xenophobia, insecurity, and the threat of impending war all became central concerns. As such this chapter affords the opportunity to graduate to a broader scale of analysis, moving outward from the intense particularity of production-related practices and seeking instead a way of thinking about how these particular moments belong to – or fail to belong to – the larger discursive frameworks that had come so forcefully into play.

How, working from the perspective of a practice-based study, can we make sense of the broader dynamics of change that Westgate signalled? Throughout the Wazi production constant attention was paid to the kinds of values that the film was to promote – judgments about human rights, the valorisation of certain kinds of social unity, the promotion of certain kinds of interpersonal relationship. These ideas were discussed in tandem with conversations about the best narrative and stylistic techniques for their encapsulation, and the kind of 'cultural production' that various different interested parties wanted to see in effect. This interplay I have called the human/culture antagonism of a cultural development discourse, during which the range of ideas, priorities and assumptions of different agents from across production practices struggle for discursive totality. The Westgate attack, which represented in many senses a moment of both social and political crisis in Nairobi, necessitated – at a surface level, at least – a reorientation of Wazi's production amongst a whole new range of human and cultural coordinates. How, and in what ways, can the broader dynamics of the nation-state; of Kenyan capitalist modernity and its antithesis in militant religious fundamentalism; of national pride and solidarity, be seen to feed back into the closed and fairly limited conversations that had so far constituted the Wazi production discourse? What kind of sense can be made of these tectonic political and cultural transformations, in light of a highly particularised study of production practices?

A significant area within media studies that has engaged with the tensions between globalisation of contemporary media and the particularity and locatedness of media's production and use has been driven by a sociological paradigm that has more-or-less sought to produce models for how media 'cultures' or 'systems' can be reconciled with the increasingly complex inter-national contexts from which they emerge. While much of this sociological work takes its founding presupposition a notion of 'social order' that deviates from our interests here, it provides a useful counter-weight for thinking through Kenyan national politics' sudden place at the heart of Wazi; while Wazi had held a relatively niche set of interests, all of a sudden Nairobi was overflowing with talk of Somali urban refugees. Ulf Hannerz's work on "complex societies" (1992) and Ulricht Beck's concerted move toward an analysis of transnational environments (2000) offer some significant first steps in

this approach, seeking to dislocate the 'nation-state' as the unit of analysis in the study of global media formations. Nick Couldry and Andreas Hepp (Couldry & Hepp 2009; Hepp 2013) have sought to continue this project of the rejection of a "container theory" of society that sees societies as "subordinated to states" (Couldry & Hepp 2009: 4), proposing instead the study of 'transcultural' dynamics that allow the elaboration of more carefully specified units of sociological analysis. The study of the relations between media production and international development, and the location of this study in the intensely internationalised environment of urban Nairobi, necessarily opens itself to similar concerns and questions. Reflecting on changes in the Wazi discourse, and the changing ways that the film's producers articulated the film's relevance after Westgate, this chapter problematises Hepp and Couldry's theory of 'transculturalisation', arguing that while it represents a valuable next step within sociology, it remains an inevitably insufficient account when considered from more critical cultural and political perspectives. Returning to literature on urban studies, I question whether the discourse of cultural development in Nairobi might be usefully studied through a 'transcultural' perspective.

Importantly, I want to advance here the critique that 'the global' of global media often lends itself to the formation of what Foucault has called a 'total history' (1989). Such an account articulates the world such that it appears that "one and the same form of historicity operates upon economic structures, social institutions and customs, the inertia of mental attitudes, technological practice, political behaviour, and subjects them all to the same type of transformation" (Foucault 1989: 9). The articulation of 'the global' becomes, in this sense, part of the structuring of the whole of social, economic, and cultural life. What would happen if we were to think of the objects of globality in terms of a 'general history', as Foucault presents it, as "the space of a dispersion", of "different temporalities" and an "interplay of correlation and dominance" (1989: 10)? What I take Foucault as meaning in this distinction between the 'total' and the 'general' is that while a total history attempts to consume the entire spectrum of human life within a totalising logic, considering a 'general history' allows us to think about the totalising dynamics as an ongoing interplay of relations generating various and dispersed political relationships across the fields of social and

cultural life. In the present context, it is not then the demonstrable veracity of the 'global' as a location, a place, an ethos, or an ideology that concerns us, but rather those ways in which the discursive elements of globalily – of geographically dispersed networks for communication, or the migration of populations and work forces across vast distances, for example – are understood as part of the dynamics of a general history of modernity articulated in particular situations and under particular circumstance. In this sense, the 'global' is no longer counterposed with the 'local'. Such a division collapses, and what we are left with instead are those myriad ways that both the local and global are themselves subsumed parts of the *particular, the located,* and *the situated*.

What this chapter eventually traces out is a critique of the notion of 'culture' as a useful unit for analysis. While Couldry and Hepp's theory relies on the positive identification of 'media cultures', can 'culture' really be bounded in such an analytically functional sense? And if not how might we treat and work with its un-bounded character? Drawing a question initially put forth by Mark Hobart in *After Culture* (2000), is any argument for 'culture' not itself a cultural argument? As will be shown, this problem of 'culture' reverberates beyond a critique of Hepp and Couldry, contributing a discursive destabilisation that will be seen as central to the practices of the 'culturalisation of development'. Seeking out a different way of framing the problem I advance instead concepts of 'mediation' – a term that plays upon a double meaning as the technological mediation of human communication, as well as conflict mediation as part of a critical research method. This final move intends to return to central focus the methodological crises of critical media research that Hepp and Couldry's sociological perspective too neatly sidesteps.

An Emergency Meeting

Throughout the pre-production stages of Wazi, CVF had been playing for time. When I joined the production team in March, the schedule for completion of the film had been preliminarily agreed with CISP for the end of July 2013. Quickly realising that this was not sufficient time to produce a film of better quality than what was achieved in the pilot

episodes of the original television series, this date was delayed until August 2013. Through significant delays to the start of scriptwriting due to contractual dispute over the recognition of CVF as a co-producer rather than a service provider had further delayed production until the end of September, with an absolute deadline for film delivery by October insisted upon by CISP. As a result, my own research plan had to adapt, shifting what I was able to take as the primary object of my study. By mid-September 2013, with the script for Wazi finally approved and casting and set construction underway at CVF's production studio in Nairobi's Westlands, we were on target to deliver the film by end October. My own involvement in the project would extend to cover the shooting of the film itself, and I would follow post-production as closely as possible from a distance while levelling my analysis at scriptwriting and on set production.

The week prior to the start of shooting the film, armed militia from Al-Shabaab invaded and eventually destroyed the Westgate shopping centre in Nairobi's affluent administrative district of Westlands, and one kilometre north from CVF's production offices. At the time I was meeting with Josphat Keya from the Slum Film Festival at a cafe across town. As news of the attack spread the city's traffic gridlocked, and stranded we watched the coverage of the attack on the flatscreen TVs in the electronics section of a nearby supermarket. The ongoing siege, which lasted several days, caused much work – especially at offices in the Westlands and Parklands area – to grind to a halt. Over the next few days I followed news coverage and hundreds of thousands of tweets from my apartment; Twitter quickly became the frontline of new information, as well as a source of misinformation and confusion[32] as print and broadcast media organisations struggled to construct a coherent narrative of events (Simon et al. 2014).

On the 25 September 2013, a day after the formal end of the siege, an emergency production meeting was called by CVF and CISP to discuss the future of the Wazi project. The meeting started with a warning from CVF that the production would now require more time: the cast were nervous to participate in the film, and the entire concept of the

[32] Mixed and contradictory reports started to circulate through Twitter, confirmed and denied by people often claiming to be standing outside Westgate watching the attack from afar.

production needed to be reworked. Westgate had, as Cavallo phrased it, been a “collective trauma that changed the way people will perceive things” (Cavallo, *production meeting*, 25 September 2013): “there is before Westgate, and there is after Westgate” (Cavallo, *personal communication*, 24 September 2015). In a different tone, the problem as CISP’s Marcella Ferracciolo framed it was one of sensitivity, driven by her desire to not "inflame" (*production meeting*, 25 September 2013) a delicate situation. The question was raised between CISP and CVF as to whether a corrupt Kenyan police officer should be depicted as a perpetrator of human rights abuses in a context where the police were being celebrated for their bravery during Westgate. It was also argued by Cavallo that it would be trivial for CVF to produce a film set during the 2012 grenade attacks in Eastleigh, while the entire country was fixated Westgate – the film must, as Cavallo saw it, now be about Westgate itself.

As the discussion proceeded, this concern with the logistics of production, script and narrative soon diverted into meandering conversations about the nature of Kenyan politics and citizenship, and the role of the police and Kenyan military in maintaining social order at a time of crisis. These topics, which at times became almost philosophical in their abstraction, were peppered with personal reflections from Cavallo, Argenti and Ferracciolo. Cavallo produced a parking ticket to show how his wife – CVF producer Silvia Gioiello[33] – and their child had left Westgate just minutes before the first grenade was reported to have been thrown. Ferracciolo’s children, she told us, were too afraid to leave the house, with parents of their school friends killed in the attack. Both Argenti and myself had also planed to be at Westgate that morning. I had to change plans for a meeting with filmmakers in Kibera. Argenti had fortuitously decided to postpone her weekly shopping trip. The conversation turned to luck, and close-calls, and a resounding disbelief at how close the Westgate attack had been to the daily lives of Wazi’s producers.

[33] Cavallo and Gioiello had met through work in Nairobi and, as Cavallo tells the story, discovering that they had both been raised only a few minutes drive away from each other in Italy promptly married and had a child. Cavallo recounts this with a fatalistic laugh, commenting that in life, no matter how far you may travel, in one way of another you always end up back at home.

What became evident through this post-Westgate production meeting was that not only did the film's role and position within the changing political and cultural circumstances facing Somali communities in Nairobi need to be reconsidered, but the nature of the proximity between the film's producers and their subject matter had changed significantly as well. Yet fascinatingly, despite the strong feeling amongst producers that Westgate necessitated a total reorganisation of the framework within which Wazi was understood, the actual changes that were made to the post-Westgate script were fairly minor. These minor changes served to shift the focus of the script away from human rights abuses against Somali refugees by police, turing it into a script about how corruption amongst the police might itself facilitate terrorism. This was done by simply changing what the 'tape' recorded, from a document of police abuse to a document of police accepting bribes for legal papers with people Momo recognises as members of Al Shabaab. However nothing of the dynamics between Somali and Kenyan characters in the script was changed. It seemed, as Ferracciolo had pointed out during the emergency meeting, that Wazi had been planned on the assumption that something like Westgate might eventually happen. The post-Westgate production discussions opened questions about the lives of the film's intended audiences; the broader socio-political situation from which the film was drawing and to which it spoke; of the emotional proximity between producers and a national crisis underway just up the road within their own community within Nairobi and as part of their own lived experience. How then do we coordinate the discursively transformative effects of the Westgate as a cultural and political moment in Nairobi, with the production of a film which sought to engage with and position itself within this discourse and yet which in doing so re-articulated this moment, re-inventing it within the production's overall framework of interests? What language might we advance as a way of making sense of such discursive interplay?

The Case for 'Transcultural Complexity' in Media Research

One possible approach to this question might be found in turning to the concept of 'transcultural' analysis proposed by social scientist Andrea Hepp and social anthropologist Nick Couldry (Hepp 2009, 2013; Hepp & Couldry 2009). Expanding upon the critique of

'container thinking' in sociology championed by Ulrich Beck (1997), Manuel Castells (1996) and John Urry (2000), among others, Hepp and Couldry argue that comparative media research is still beholden to a "national-territorial" container in which "the nation state is taken as the unquestioned starting point" (2009: 2). Yet this 'national-territorial' bias, they go on to argue, is an insufficient basis for exploring "media cultures in times of media globalisation" (2009: 2). Seeing our contemporary world as a global complex in which 'social forms' "transgress national borders and build up transnational social spaces" (2009: 5), Hepp and Couldry propose the liberation of media sociology from national-territorial boundaries by recognising such boundaries as themselves part of the "contested practices through which specific cultures are articulated in their particularity" (2009: 12).

Implied in Hepp and Couldry's work is therefore a notion of social and cultural 'complexity' in the context of modern, urban environments. Notable in their treatment of this complexity is a move beyond understanding 'complexity' as a condition of the multiple flows of communication networks that typify globalisation (cf. Urry 2003), toward a sense of complexity as a multiplicity of meanings that proliferate more particularised locations. In attempting to establish a form of systematic analysis from this reflection, they propose an idea of 'cultural thickening' which takes place through the articulation of meanings, and through which what they consider 'cultures' seem to amalgamate (2009: 3). On this basis they put forward a 'transcultural' perspective in which media cultures may be compared while rejecting the nation state as the basis of this comparison, opening ourselves instead to a range of other categorisations and dynamics through which 'cultures' may be seen to interrelate. They offer diasporas, popular culture, social movements and religious belief communities as examples of 'cultural thickenings' that "transgress states and their territories" (2009: 16), becoming "deterritorialised transmedial communicative spaces" (2009: 16). The 'transcultural' thesis that they advance might therefore be thought of as a perspective from which communication across territories might be thought of without an incarcerating deferral to territorial language.

Hepp and Couldry's 'transcultural' approach suits our current line of questioning for, while their work might seek to promote a programme for the comparison of 'media cultures', as they have themselves rejected the nation-state as the starting point of their enquiries, there is no reason this comparison need be an international comparison between nationally or regionally bound cultures. As a project associated to a broader programme of international development, Wazi in fact already demonstrates and embodies many of the frictions of the 'global' if not in a multiplicity of geographical place, then in its multiplicity of national and cultural identities. One of the consequences of Hepp and Couldry's move away from the container-thinking of traditional sociology and toward a more discursive constitution of society is that their object of study is correspondingly transformed, from national media organisations toward a "comparative and internationalised account of media's role in our everyday lives" (2009: 22). That is to say, the 'national-territorial' is no longer seen as a broad category for global locations, but is articulated as part of the 'everyday lives' within which the 'international' and the 'global' remain important components. In this same sense the Wazi production was thought of as speaking to a particular issue in urban Nairobi: it sought to represent urban migration and xenophobia and in doing so articulated moments of cultural and social cohesion and difference which marked out aspects of the contemporary character of the city. It drew on ethical boundaries belonging to international development and programmes for European cooperation, and placed these boundaries into contention with media production in a struggle which I have elected to call a human/culture antagonism in development discourse. After Westgate, the proximal relationship between producers and the production's themes and topics was altered, re-drawing the lines of connection within the production itself and establishing a somewhat altered set of discursive parameters within which the script operated. In this sense, the various national and local and interpersonal relationships that were established within the 'everyday life' of the production might profit from a transcultural frame of analysis, in so far as such a perspective seems to offer a way of reflecting on broader dynamics without abandoning the particularity of its discursive formation.

Historical Trauma, Empathy, and the Re-Imagined Audience

What would a 'transcultural' approach toward understanding Wazi and its post-Westgate transformations require? Hepp and Couldry's proposal invites us to think about the relations between different global media not as part of the dynamics of national and state-based identities, but rather as relations between 'media cultures' whose boundaries are drawn up in different terms. As a European Union funded project produced by Italians, written by a Kenyan and based around migratory Somali communities in Nairobi, Wazi had already very clearly belonged to a complex global context. However Westgate foregrounded these global dynamics – drawing into further relief questions of international terrorism, Kenyan nationalism, the compound insecurity urban refugees, and the relative sanctity of the lives of European middle-class migrants living in Nairobi. A 'transnational' perspective might help us make sense of these dynamics by resisting the nationalising impetus of Westgate, allowing us to seek out instead other ways of thinking 'between borders'. By looking into the post-Westgate conversations between producers, funders, and scriptwriters involved with Wazi, we might start making sense of the ways that Westgate was addressed through the film's production. I will do this by breaking down post-Westgate production discussions into three interrelated moments: i) the audience re-imagined as a civic subject; ii) the producer's empathic relationship to Nairobi contributing to a 'world view' of development; iii) the predominance of a rhetoric of a pivotal historical trauma that 'changed everything'. The argument here is that these three moments might be explored as examples of a 'cultural thickening' of humanitarian ethics, of a shared sense of global responsibility and of belonging to a singular historical moment, contributing to an appreciation of the 'transcultural' dynamics of development.

Rethinking the Political Subjectivity of the Viewer as Citizen

The emergency production meeting was called in Cavallo's living room, at an apartment in easy reach of everybody else, in a gated compound on the edge of Westlands. In attendance was Ferracciolo, Cavallo, Argenti and myself. JC Niala had been excluded, as Cavallo claimed to want to have a plan in place before approaching her. He had also

indicated earlier a desire to keep Niala and the funders separate, such that he could mediate funders' suggestions to her through his own interpretative framework.

During the meeting, the conversation quickly turned to the thematic use of police abuse within the script. As Marcella Ferracciolo noted, CISP's biggest concern was that the production not aggravate an already tense situation, suggesting that the script tries "to emphasise more the role of the good cop" (*production meeting*, 25 September 2013). In her desire to shift focus away from the criminality of an abusive police officer as the epicentre for the suffering of Somalis, Ferracciolo went so far as to suggest that the 'bad policeman' character "could be a bad businessman instead" (*production meeting*, 25 September 2013). To Ferracciolo the problem was the timing of the film's distribution, which she argued would be launched in the context of a new wave of police reprisals in Eastleigh following Westgate. Cavallo and Argenti broadly agreed with this position, commenting "why are we talking about police corruption in a moment in which the police have been glorified?" (Cavallo, *production meeting*, 25 September 2013). It was to CVF equally as urgent that they rethink and adapt the script to reflect the new post-Westgate political environment in Nairobi.

This conversation about the responsibility of the film within the context of Westgate marked an alteration within the production's discourse in terms of its broader engagement with Kenyan social and political life. However CISP's focus on mitigating political aggravation and shying away from anything that might be construed as inflammatory remained strongly aligned with their policy of the avoidance of responsibility. This avoidance was best represented in the fact that Ferracciolo was more willing to finish the production of Wazi and simply not distribute it, than to make changes so extensive that the project would become significantly delayed. It would have been simpler for CISP to make no impact at all, than to risk making the wrong kind of impact. Demonstrating a very different set of priorities, CVF took seriously the task of readjusting the script to better reflect what they saw as a dramatically altered environment. Westgate was understood by CVF as a "collective trauma" (Cavallo, *production meeting*, 25 September 2013) that had radically

changed the Kenyan public's engagement with issues of both Somali refugees and Kenyan police. As such, the whole production needed to be rethought:

> Cavallo: … what we have to do basically, Marcella [Ferracciolo], is to make this film as much … as like the perspective of a Kenyan.
>
> Argenti: Representative of their feelings.
>
> Cavallo: Because if we make this as a human rights thing, like from the perspective of a European who's working here, it will be like 'fuck off, get out of my country, you don't understand what's going on'.
>
> Argenti: 'You are an external'
>
> *Production meeting*, 25 September 2013

There gradually emerged an idea that the intended audience of the film, as well as the circumstances within which they would be watching, had dramatically changed. This idea brought with it an implicit identification within the production discourse of the civic and political attitudes of a 'Kenyan public' whose nature was more or less associated to what Argenti called the "blind patriotism" (*production meeting*, 25 September 2013) that followed Westgate. This intended audience had already come under scrutiny earlier in the production process, during the transformation of the *Wazi?* TV pilot episodes into the *Wazi? FM* feature film. At this earlier point, the way that the film's audience was being imagined shifted from the passive recipients of a participatory community production strong in 'NGO rhetoric', toward a more savvy 'internationalised' Kenyan audience perceived to be more literate in sophisticated film narrative. In this second return to the production's 'audience' then, we witness the further transformation of the audience from an 'internationalised' consumer into a particular type of civic subject, strongly engaged with Kenyan national pride and potentially hostile toward a film that sought to engage with governmental accountability in the mistreatment of urban refugees in Nairobi. Interestingly, where the original shift in Wazi away from an NGO rhetoric had marked the start of a distinction in the production between 'NGO' and 'cultural' filmmaking, this subsequent shift partly repositioned the film *back* in NGO terms. The possibility of removing references to terrorism all together, as well as avoiding any implication of police abuse, began to reemerge. An NGO rhetoric started to "clawback" (Fiske 1987) the production to an 'a-political' position reminiscent of the EU's own stance, in which the love story and community drama could

take precedence once more over themes of direct political and social criticism of the Kenyan state. Beneath the discursive pressures of Westgate, the political articulations of Wazi started to shift away from direct social activism, and back toward a more domesticated and didactic narrative approach.

Importantly, this reflection sidesteps any engagement with the notion of 'the audience' in the way that Ien Ang has defined it, as the "multiplicity of situated practices and experiences" (Ang, 1991: 165) of people sitting at home, in cinemas, in front of televisions, and so forth. Neither does it properly engage with the idea of the audience as related to an active and political 'public', a problematic relationship explored in some depth by Sonia Livingstone (2005: 17-41). This current reflection positions the audience in a more limited, and ultimately more manageable way, as part of the imaginary function of a small group of producers interpreting and projecting what they believe to be the public opinion of their eventual viewers. In his doctoral thesis on the audience of the Kenyan Television Network (KTN), George King'ara (2010) proposes a similar image of Kenyan television producers imagining their intended audiences by positioning these audiences as the appropriate subjects of the ideas that producers seek to promote. King'ara goes on to note in KTN producers an "ambivalence with regards to how they should conceptualise the audience vis-à-vis the discourses of national unity and development" (2010: 91) that their station sought to promote. The audience on this account becomes a passive place-holder designed by media producers to fit their intended outcomes. In a similar sense, we might leave aside here the question of whether or not the Kenyan public was in actuality so sensitised by Westgate that Wazi would have risked serious political inflammation. What seems more readily relevant is that Wazi's *eventual audience* were in themselves entirely unimportant to the post-Westgate production meeting. What the re-positioning and re-thinking of the film's intended audience in the wake of Westgate reveals instead are anxieties internal to the production itself; anxieties over the impact the film sought to have, and the kind of message it sought to put across.

Empathy and the Normative 'World View'

This post-Westgate conversation about the film's new audience was interwoven with a series of divergences during which producers slipped from discussing the film, into discussing how their own personal lives had been affected by Westgate. These stories served to ground the production conversation in the reality of the lives of producers; these were not simply abstract ideas being discussed, but topics which were close to the everyday lives and experiences of Nairobians – foreign or otherwise. These conversational divergences included recounting horror stories circulating the news and Twitter, as well as sharing tales about friends or acquaintances who were involved one way or another in the attacks. While there was an element of abstraction in the group's discussion of how the political environment in Nairobi has changed, there was intermingled with this abstraction a sense of proximity and closeness to this context in a way that was actualised very differently than during earlier practices of scriptwriting. In the context of conversations about how the Kenyan police should be thematised within the Wazi script, and accordingly the kind of relationship the Kenyan state should be shown to have with Nairobi's Somali communities, these moments of personal reflection had a significant role in defining the direction of the emergency production meeting.

This proximity might be taken in two related senses. The first is the proximity of certain new narrative themes, mediated through mainstream Kenyan journalist coverage, and interpreted by producers as central to contemporary Kenyan political conversations: new elements in how the story of relations between Kenya and Somalia should now be constituted based on how they were being spoken about in local press. The second, in a related sense, might be thought of as an empathetic proximity between producers and the social and political reality of Nairobi that they sought to capture through film; a reality which had been domesticated, bringing the once distant topics of urban refugees and xenophobia from a reflection on 'other' people's issues, back to a "home territory" (Morley 2000). This 'home territory', defying simple territorial or national boundaries, became organised around civil and anti-terrorist sentiments, naturalising an increasingly dominant notion of humanity

and human equality while entangled amidst the complex urbanity – and modernity – of Nairobi.

In this first sense, stories from local news coverage of Westgate began to inflect what producers thought of as the important story to tell. As Argenti offered, one such key issue were reports that the militants had stockpiled weapons at Westgate, which raised the question of whether this was made possible "due to corruption" (*production meeting*, 25 September 2013). As Cavallo elaborated, the media was full of talk about a possible investigation of a link between police corruption and the suggestion that "some Somali terrorists were able to circulate freely in the country because they bought documents" (*production meeting*, 25 September 2013). This theme, which ran throughout the meeting, was paralleled by the seemingly contradictory articulation of police as now sitting beyond criticism:

> Cavallo: I mean, you go on Twitter, and Facebook, everybody…
>
> Argenti: Even me. The first time I saw a policeman and I did like this [gives a thumbs up].
>
> Cavallo: The police are the heroes.
>
> *Production meeting*, 25 September 2013

This contradictory treatment of the police, each justified by reference to the attitudes of a Kenyan public garnered through social media and journalism, is partly resolved by the fact that the theme of corruption was not tethered to *police* corruption: rather, corruption itself was taken as one of the enabling causes of terrorism. This was to be achieved in the script by simply changing the evidence that Momo and Kevo capture on their 'tape', swapping video footage of police abuse for evidence of a police officer *unknowingly* selling legal documents to men that Momo recognises as terrorists. However despite this shift, the overarching message of the script was to remain the same. As Ferracciolo clarified:

> …Kenyan people know, we know that Somalis, some Somalis in the urban area are related to Al-Shabaab but our target was, our objective was to show that not all of them are like that and they have rights.
>
> Ferracciolo, *Production meeting*, 25 September 2013

This gradual coalescence of a shared understanding of public Kenyan discourse surrounding corruption, patriotism and terrorism was therefore balanced with the overriding investment of the project's mandate beneath the NURRIA programme, with a focus on the promotion of the human rights of Somalis in the context of their systematic abuse. For Ferracciolo this meant putting more narrative focus on "what the good cop is doing to fight terrorism" while simultaneously exploring the human rights abuses of Somalis, primarily by police officers in Eastleigh. What starts to emerge from this engagement is a shift away from a narrative of a Somali community struggling within a Kenyan city, to a story about Somalis struggling *with* Kenyans toward a shared goal of defending Kenya from terrorism:

> Cavallo: It's also a issue of security, you know? So I think, I mean I think…
>
> Ferracciolo: So maybe the end could be that the good guys, on of the heroes who died in Westgate, really fought for something good and you can see.
>
> Cavallo: Yeah I mean I think we have to build something in line with this rampant patriotic feeling. Although we don't have to give up, I mean this is just to compensate, that's what I'm trying to say…
>
> […]
>
> McNamara: Well, if we look at the 'rampant patriotic feeling' now, and we say 'what does CISP, NURRIA project want to try and achieve? The most impactful message now is not that Momo is fighting for the rights of his small community, but that Momo is fighting for his country, which is Kenya?
>
> Argenti: Exactly.
>
> McNamara: So we show the story of a Somali guy who's actually working to try and protect and work for Kenya, it's his country, even though he's Somali and he's a refugee, he -
>
> Argenti: Exactly. It will have impact and relevance, that's the -
>
> Cavallo: And on top of that there is this whole dialogue happening between Kevo and Momo, about that fact that Momo has left Somalia because of Al-Shabaab…
>
> Argenti: [nodding] This can fit very well on what we already said -
>
> Cavallo: And the fact that he's [Momo] trying to tell him [Kevo] that Kenyans do not understand the fact that they have been running away from Al-Shabaab and that Al-Shabaab does not represent the voice of the people of Somalia.
>
> *Production meeting*, 25 September 2013

Partly through a proximity with contemporary popular opinion gathered through mainstream and social media coverage of Westgate, the production team began to articulate the role of Somali community activism within Kenya in very different terms. What emerged was an

overcautious marriage of Somali activism against their own persecution by corrupt police, with a vindication of the police – and the Kenyan state – as the perpetrators of this abuse. Instead the enemy in the script shifted from the Kenyan Government Directive and systematic abuse of urban refugees to anti-state terrorism and the corruption that supports it. And while the heroes of the script remained the Somali community, it was now a community that did not come together to support each other, but a community that came together to support Kenya.

On a separate yet very much related level, an empathetic proximity between producers and what was happening in Nairobi all around them strongly underlined these articulatory changes. Argenti's feeling of approval toward the Kenyan police; Ferracciolo's thoughts on what Kenyan people were now thinking about Somalis; Cavallo's opinion on the 'rampant patriotism' in Nairobi at the time – these were not purely analytical arguments, but expressions of positions of personal entanglement as civilians within and amongst these dynamics. The emerging thematic centrality of terrorism and patriotism, and the shift away from a story about a Somali community fighting for their own empowerment toward a story about Somalis joining Kenyans to fight a common enemy of corruption and terror, was not driven by a purely rational appraisal of the situation in Kenya but the emotional (and partly fearful) involvement of people who had suddenly found their own lives unexpectedly embroiled amidst the social dynamics about which they were in the middle of making a film.

The Rhetoric of a Pivotal Historical Trauma

These reconsiderations of the suitability of the film's content in this new context of distribution were marked by a shared recognition that something so calamitous had happened that it had fundamentally altered the entire Wazi production. As Cavallo stated, "[t]here are two moments in Kenya: before Westgate, after Westgate". There was an assumption at work, particularly from the perspective of CVF, that the whole of the Wazi project would need to be rebuilt from the ground up. While Ferracciolo took a slightly more cautious position on this, suggesting that it was widely known that something like Westgate could easily happen and that the script might need not change too much as a result, even

Ferracciolo accepted that the environment in Nairobi had become significantly more complicated for Somali refugees. The attack on Westgate was taken as having disrupted the terms of the production's totalising discourse, the boundaries within which its key referents were made meaningful shifting significantly.

This notion of discursive reorganisation emerging from historical trauma resonates with Jalal Toufic's (2009) theorisation of a 'surpassing disaster' in which "we encounter in its aftermath symptoms of withdrawal of tradition" (2009: 12). Here Toufic – in reference to Hiroshima and Beirut – proposes the special function of a disaster which has not only damaged physical space, but destroyed archives and places of public life in such a way that there is an "additional immaterial withdrawal of literary, philosophical and thoughtful texts" (2009: 12). What Toufic's eclectic work struggles to attain is some understanding of the complex and oftentimes non-linear ways that physical destruction results in 'immaterial' changes within a society. The destruction of Westgate, in a related sense, had a similar effect on the types of conversations and productions that were now permissible. There was a strong sense of historical pivot, of the 'before' and the 'after' of Westgate within Nairobi's social and political environment, and around which everything to do with the production had to be rethought.

Assumptions about the pivotal and central nature of the historical moment of Westgate drove the reconceptualisation of the film's audience and the revaluation of the film in relation to the broader context to which it was speaking. Westgate was seen as having disrupted the terms of the production's totalising discourse; the boundaries within which its key referents were made meaningful has been shifted significantly. The conversations that the Wazi production team were having, and the process of shifting Wazi from an 'NGO film' toward something seemingly more cultural and politically critical, were returned to a more cautious, depoliticised space in which any enmity between Kenyans and Somalis was to be underplayed, and any critique of the police softened. What becomes of particular significance, in light of these reflections, is therefore the fact that despite this notion of historical pivot, of the need to reimagine the film's Kenyan audience due to the deeply

changed cultural and social context within which Wazi was now positioned, very little of the final script was actually changed.

Only two significant changes were effected. The first was to place the film in the period leading up to Westgate: it would be introduced with stock footage of media coverage of 2012 grenade attacks, and end with stock footage of Westgate and Kenyan parliamentary discussions about the role of corruption in facilitating terror in the country. Secondly, within the film itself, only scenes concerning 'the tape' were significantly altered, such that the tape now held footage of a corrupt policeman unknowingly taking a bribe from people whom Momo identifies as "dangerous guys" from a refugee camp. Regardless of intense discussions into how the entire concept of Wazi needed to be reworked, much of Wazi's pre-Westgate formation seemed to speak to a post-Westgate environment. Despite its supposed desire to address the political and cultural realities of Somali urban refugees in Nairobi, Wazi had already significantly anticipated an event like Westgate happening within its original conceptualisation. What did change in the script was the shift of the film's focus of critique, from a critique of the Kenyan state's treatment of Somali refugees to a critique of Somalia-based terrorism. In both accounts, however, the overarching purpose of the film remained the vindication of Somali communities, with the "objective to show that not all of them are like that and they have rights" (Ferracciolo, *production meeting*, 25 September 2013). Conversations about the re-invention of Wazi after Westgate therefore seemed not to reflect the urgent need to re-organise the production's social and political meanings in accordance to Nairobi's changed political environment, so much as they *confirm* aspects of the developmental logic from which the Wazi project was initiated in the first place. In an important sense, NURRIA and its Wazi project might be seen to have *pre-articulated* Westgate, at least in the sense that it had largely already provided a framework for understanding what Westgate meant in the context of the lives of urban refugees, even before Westgate had happened.

Some Elements of a Cultural Thickening

These three interrelated strands of the post-Westgate production meeting indicate some of the ways that Westgate was articulated through production-related practices into a moment of discursive crisis within the production. Appreciations of Westgate as a pivotal historical moment promoted a sense amongst producers that something fundamental had changed in Nairobi, and that the film needed to be reworked both in terms of the kinds of Kenyans it was speaking to, and the kind of environment that it would be distributed within. While this rhetoric of historical pivot might have resulted in fewer adjustments than it suggested, with much of the film remaining unchanged and only a few days dedicated to rewriting a small selection of scenes, it nevertheless had a profound effect on how the production team thought about, and discussed, the relation between the film and its imagined beneficiary community.

Within these three elements – an idea of historical pivot, the reconsideration of the 'audience' as a highly sensitised civil subject, and the way that producers started to think about the film's topic in terms of their own lived experience – we might begin to see a kind of 'cultural thickening' at work in the way put forth by Hepp and Couldry (2009). This thickening is exercised through anti-terrorist political sentiments, a rising sense of public and civil responsibility, and of an acquiescence to Kenyan nationalism in the context of human tragedy. Where the Wazi production had originally been a vehicle for a story about a Somali and a Kenyan working together to call out the police abuse of Somalis, the discursive pressures of Westgate transformed it into a story about a Kenyan and a Somali working together to prevent Somali terrorism in Nairobi. Ideas which had been naturalised within the production's logic were here drawn into stark relief: the role of terrorism was made explicit; the accountability of the Kenyan police was withdrawn. Importantly, the people that the film was championing also became somewhat implicated in this change as well. While originally a film about the valorisation of Somali communities in Nairobi and the championing of urban refugee rights, post-Westgate it became impossible to talk about Somalis without also talking about Kenyan national sovereignty and defence. The

valorisation of a Somali community in this way became the valorisation of a Somali community working to support and defend Kenya from Somali terrorism.

This cultural thickening might therefore be thought of as part of the expression of a 'culture of development', articulated through a particular set of production-related practices; the coagulation of certain significations around key ideas used to *locate* the production by its producers within broader social and political dynamics. This 'culture', observed from a transcultural perspective resistant to the strong national-regional implications of Westgate, might then be imagined in a more stratospheric sense, as a kind of global human ethics, and the expression of a political and social unity and sovereignty that the crisis of Westgate served to draw out.

Where is the 'Culture' of the 'Transcultural' Relation?

Taking on Hepp and Couldry's 'transcultural perspective' serves as a useful starting point for thinking about how the Westgate moment influenced the production of Wazi. It takes a productive step away from the "methodological nationalism" (Beck 2000) of reflections on social and political issues in media and cultural research, while keeping focused on the problems of how cultural formations and identities might function in a 'globalised' environment. However it is worth noting that our current approach arrives at the 'transcultural' from a very different vantage point to Hepp and Couldry. We take up the question of transcultural relationships not out of a broader concern for the sociology of communication in the context of globalisation, but rather from an inverted perspective that starts with particular and located media-related practices. As I have argued, Westgate brought these practices (and their accreted discursive frameworks) into sudden and unexpected confrontation with a discourse on Kenyan national security which reframed the 'global' significance of the Wazi project. This confrontation threw the cultural and developmental conversations through which the Wazi project was constituted into a discursive crisis. And this crisis invited a rethinking amongst producers of how their project related to larger, global dynamics; it re-articulated the global into a new set of relations with

ideas of national identity, security, sovereignty and anti-terrorism. As such, while a 'transcultural perspective' that seeks out new categories for the comparison of various 'media cultures' might encourage us to think beyond the nation-state, given the turbulence and radically disruptive features of the Westgate moment in Wazi, how precisely are we to define such discrete 'cultures' as coherent objects of analytical comparison?

In constructing their argument, Hepp and Couldry rely on a definition of 'media culture' which allows an account of certain transitive dynamics *between* such cultures. They define such media cultures as "all cultures whose primary resource of meaning are accessible through technology-based media" (2009: 11). This however promotes an immediate problem: the definition of a 'media culture' is beholden to a seemingly superficial agreement on what constitutes 'technology-based media'. While a 'transcultural' perspective might start us in the right direction, it is limited by an overriding need to categorise and calcify various and highly fluid practices into 'cultures', limiting 'media cultures' to their particular technological determination as such. How does this account for human relationships, and the relationships between various human ideas, mediated through email, spoken conversation, audiovisual and written texts, and so forth? Are aspects of these relationships to be taken as 'media cultures', and others not? How do we begin to define the boundaries between one culture and another, one cultural moment, one *type* of culture? And yet if we fail to reach a clear consensus on this point, how can we coherently speak of 'transcultural' analysis of such media cultures?

Hepp and Couldry's work holds a strategic value in their project of establishing a theoretical foundation for global comparative media research that is not beholden to analyses of the nation-state. However, when confronted with accounts of media cultures as fields of often contesting, contradictory and even antagonistic practices – as the production of Wazi and its discursive crisis in Westgate would seem to be – an argument for 'transcultural analysis' seems somewhat more difficult to assimilate. The 'global' relationships of Wazi were not determinate relations between definitive and distinct spaces on different parts of our planet. Instead the 'global' was articulated amongst a set of located discursive articulations, and is

seen to relate to how people speak about their work (and their ideas) as belonging to general, far reaching, universal, ethical, and 'global' conversations. Yet these remain situated and located features of discursive articulation. What Hepp and Couldry treat as *trans*-cultural exchange, might be reframed as an antagonistic discourse on the global.

Conclusions on a Pre-Production

On my last day with the Cultural Video Foundation I wandered around the grounds surrounding their small studio, which takes up the corner unit of a squat building on Muthithi Road. Welders were working on the erecting a metal framework for one of Wazi's bar scenes, and behind large sliding metal doors at the far end of the compound a storeroom had been emptied out and construction started on the set for the Wazi? FM radio station. Once production had wrapped the bar would serve as an outdoor meeting space for CVF, and the group were already in discussions with their landlords about the possibility of setting up a real working radio station in the space inhabited by Wazi's fictional one – some of the peripheral benefits to arise from putting development funding to work in innovative ways. CVF's front garden was full of people, lounging on benches made from the colourful recycled metal chassis of matatu buses, excerpt of script in hand. They were actors, final respondents to Wazi's casting call. Argenti introduced me to the main cast, many of whom had come to collect their copies of the final script or their final contracts. There was a thickness to the energy around us, very different from the often sombre ambience of long hours of scriptwriting. The start of shooting was only a few days away.

Adapting the post-Westgate script marked one of the last moments in the pre-production of *Wazi?FM*, and the end of my engagement with the project. My time working on Wazi had revealed several interesting features of how a film might be produced within the conditions of development funding, disrupting any assumed ideas about how 'development' might *use* 'culture' to further its own goals. With exception of JC Niala, Wazi was a project almost entirely run – and funded – by Europeans. And yet, against the post-development narratives which might treat this eurocentrism with categorical suspicion, the operation of

subjectivities within this 'European' project cannot be thought of as the simple insistence of 'Western ideas' on 'African realities'. Instead, the Wazi project appears as a situated discursive negotiation of different positions, subjects, value judgments: Cavallo's political activism; Niala's almost sentimental respect for drama and the value of community; Argenti's life-long passion for participatory filmmaking; Ferracciolo's fear of being too sensational; my own naive concern with authenticity in the representation of Somalis. The Wazi production served as an opportunity in which these different positions were brought together into dialogue, and the final production bears the marks – however minor – of each of these perspectives.

Within this field of production practices, what struggled to emerge was an authoritative articulation of social relations between Somalis and Kenyans which, in the final analysis, can be seen to demonstrate a deep conservatism to the project's original developmental mandate. Despite the rhetoric of the 'historical pivot' of Westgate – the feeling amongst producers that the entire conversation in Kenya about urban refugees had been fundamentally transformed – there was strikingly little changed in the actual script. The most significant change that did take place was the shifting of the film away from its strong stance against the police abuse of Somalis – a point on which its EU funders were always uncomfortable – toward a less accusatory position against an abstract notion of corruption. This marked a clawing-back of an apolitical stance advocated for by CISP within the production, driven by a fear of angering the Kenyan state through a problem stamped with an EU logo, or of enflaming the Kenyan population's 'rampant patriotic feeling' in an apparently transformed post-Westgate political environment.

There emerged in this sense a fascinating irony within Wazi, in which positions on anti-'NGO rhetoric' are coupled with the clawback of NGO interests, and where radical political activism is continuously tempered by cautious conservatism. Keeping this irony in mind, the Wazi project can be seen as a turbulent project full of dialogue and difference, but one that operates within certain material and discursive boundaries. The pressures of funding cannot be said to be absolute, and yet neither are are they absolutely overcome:

funders' expectations are negotiated, alongside a producers' and writers' varying ambitions, within the contested discursive field of a 'cultural' and 'developmental' production.

The Unintended Inconsequence Somalis

It might be noted, in closing, that Wazi was never really about capturing 'authentic' Somali voices and urban refugee life. Yet this is not to say that this inconsequence of Somalis within Wazi was a simple shortsightedness that *aught* to have been rectified. Rather, with the same irony with which Ferguson studies the political consequences of 'failed' development projects (1994), the inconsequence of Somalis might be seen as the very pre-condition for the presence of *something else*. It was not the social and political reality of Somali communities that were being represented by Wazi. Rather, the project fed off what Somalis have come to mean in Nairobi, not as people but as *moments* articulated in relation to conversations about human rights, global ethics, political sovereignty, and so forth. It is this chimera of authenticity, the ironic double-play in which Somalis are represented through their very disarticulation, that Hepp and Couldry's account of 'transcultural' analysis is unable to contain. Beholden to a unitising methodology that maintains focus on the individual elements and see these elements as composing the totalised field of the social, their concept struggles to encapsulate those features of mediated cultural and social relations that fail to adhere to such unitary terms. Qualities like absence, rearrangement, multiple and manifold contradictory meanings, and so forth, fall from analysis and view. By taking on a practice-based perspective we are able to grasp in greater detail some of these more subtle workings. However, in turn, my taking up such a close analysis, do we not begin to lose sight of the broader and situating logics which might help us make sense of these dynamics within their more general meanings?

By retreating to a concept of 'mediation' which both maintains a sense of 'mediator', as well as the complexity of the mediated urban environment of Nairobi, some generality might be maintained. In this sense, neither the Wazi production nor my own study and analysis of the production are analytical or systematic engagements with Somali life in Nairobi. Instead what we are dealing with is the *mediation* of Somali life by a group of European producers,

taking place in parallel to a range of other mediations of nation-hood and national security, of scales of social and cultural difference, of civil rights, of a shared humanity, and so forth. If Nairobi might be thought of as a city of ‘complexity’ then it should be in this sense: as a space of multiple, manifold and ongoing mediations, articulating various elements into moments held together in the practices of the lives that populate the city.

Chapter 5

A Developmental Film Festival: Framing the Slum Film Festival 2012

The following two chapters will turn to consider the second of this thesis's engagements: accounting for my time working with the Slum Film Festival (SFF), an annual media event of outdoor screenings which takes place in Nairobi for the benefit of communities within the city's informal settlements. During the period of this research, between June 2012 and September 2013, these screenings took place in open public grounds in the neighbourhoods of Kibera and Mathare.[34,35] In distinction to Wazi, whose final product is an advocative audiovisual representation of social and political tension in Nairobi, the SFF seeks instead to develop the 'film cultures' of its beneficiary communities, and does so by screening films, organising film training workshops, and promoting the content of filmmakers working and living in informal settlements. Originally conceived of and championed in 2011 by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation,[36] throughout the period of my research the SFF was a 'project' – rather than an independent organisation – co-hosted by the Hot Sun Foundation and Slum-TV, two media NGOs based in the Nairobi neighbourhoods of Kibera and Mathare respectively.[37] The festival events themselves were focused around a week of outdoor film screenings, with large inflatable canvas screens erected by air pumps connected to diesel generators in the open

[34] Kibera is a well defined settlement, enclosed by Ngong Forest, Nairobi River and its primary thoroughfare of Kibera Dive. Mathare is more ambiguous, with the term used quite generally to indicate what is in fact a cluster of separate informal settlements gathered around Mathare Valley.

[35] The SFF expanded in 2014 to include screenings in Korogocho, a neighbourhood that sits beyond Mathare, toward the northeastern outskirts of Nairobi.

[36] 'Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo' (AECID) is an agency of the Spanish government primarily tasked with poverty reduction and sustainable human development ("AECID", www.aecid.es), whose operations in Kenya are managed from the Spanish Embassy in Nairobi.

[37] Hot Sun Foundation has since been removed from the organisation when, in 2014, the SFF was established as an independent CBO. The removal of Hot Sun, which was justified as due to their lack of involvement in the project, was commented on by Hot Sun Foundation director Nathan Collet - through a public posting on Facebook - as tantamount to 'intellectual property theft'.

communal grounds of Mathare's Mabatini and Kibera's Kamukunji.[38] These outdoor screenings were preceded by a week of free filmmaking workshops for aspiring filmmakers in both communities. The festival ended with an Awards Ceremony, hosted at the cinema of the Alliance Française, a French cultural centre in downtown Nairobi, to which facilitating partners, donors, and awarded filmmakers were invited to celebrate an event imagined as a way to promote a programme of film "From the slums, by the slums, and for the slum dwellers".[39] In this way, the SFF locates both film and filmmaking as key elements in the empowerment of slum communities. Its stated intention is to both encourage the production of film by slum-based filmmakers as a way of promoting 'slum stories' that defy common narratives of slums as places of crime and poverty, as well as to screen high budget films within informal settlements in an attempt to stimulate an awareness and appreciation of the film medium.

In distinction from the preceding study of Wazi, the SFF demonstrates a culturalisation of development in a different form. The NURRIA project saw Wazi as an opportunity to use culture as a medium through which to better disseminate the values and interests of its programme of interventions. On the other hand, the SFF takes up the promotion of 'film culture' as a way of empowering the lives, and developing cultural expression amongst, people living within informal settlements. Hence, while quite a different example of the culturalisation of development, the SFF nevertheless represents an important discursive moment in which a development project – on this occasion, a project for the empowerment of people living within Nairobi's informal settlements – takes up the challenge of doing cultural work in the name of developmental progress. However, while NURRIA had very clear developmental goals focused on human rights advocacy work for urban refugee communities, the SFF is driven by the far more amorphous goal of developing 'slums'. As I will go on to show, what these 'slums' are, and how they were treated as the subjects of development, was unclear and contested throughout the project. As such, while the following study of the SFF advances the overall concerns of this thesis, it does so by

[38] This is not to be mistaken for the similarly named 'Kamukunji grounds' in the Eastlands region, which was an important staging point for political rallies in 1990 pushing for multi-party political representation.

[39] This was the official SFF slogan during 2011 and 2012. It has since been updated to 'A community-based annual film event featuring stories from, by, and about people living in urban slums'.

shifting our attention from questions about the articulatory practices involved in the production of a 'cultural representation', toward questions about how and in what ways 'empowerment' is articulated in relation to the 'culture' of audiovisual production and consumption in Nairobi's informal settlements. Bringing the cases of Wazi and the SFF together will provide us with a richer and more nuanced narrative view of how development and aid sectors relate to and effect media production in Nairobi.

The observations of this present chapter, which focus around the 2012 edition of the festival, explore the SFF in relation to existing literature in the emerging field of film festival studies. I draw out some initial reflection on the SFF's objectives and the ways that the festival is located by its facilitators within a development discourse in Nairobi. In doing so, I build an initial account of some of the practices that might be seen to constitute a slum-based and slum-focused film festival. Notably, there were several important departures during the SFF 2012 between the event organisers' stated aims and goals, and what 'actually happened' during the event itself. Many scheduled films were not screened, the film selection and award process exhibited a dominant nepotism in favour of films produced by facilitating partners, and the festival's prestigious closing ceremony underlined a deep-seated segregation between the project's beneficiary communities and the communities of its funders. With sentiments familiar to traditional critiques of development, this distinction between the 'intentions' and 'actualities' of the SFF 2012 raises interesting questions about who the SFF's *actual* beneficiaries are, and what funders and facilitators in fact gain through their involvement with the project.

I undertook an introductory exploration of some of these issues in an earlier publication, co-authored between film scholar Lindiwe Dovey, the SFF's founder Federico Oliver, and myself (2013). However, in reviewing this earlier framing of the SFF, it became apparent that while such questions offer a useful starting point for thinking about how the SFF operates, they privilege the 'actuality' of the festival as a positive, measurable event. Seen in this way, the drifting between the event's plans and its outcomes provided the evidence upon which the SFF's 2012 edition appeared to be a 'failed festival'. Re-visited from within

a practice-based approach, these same issues seem somewhat different. The practices of planning, conceptualising, imagining, and initiating the SFF are not dichotomised between 'plan' and 'actuality', but are rather taken as part of the range of articulatory, and potentially antagonistic or contradictory, practices that constitute the 'slum festival' as 'event'. Taken in this way, the divergences between what was planned and what took place during the festival go well beyond what film scholar Janet Harbord calls the "contingency produced by the act of staging" (2009: 42) a live event. It is not enough to consider the ways that the contingencies of a 'live event' disrupted the well laid plans of a festival. Rather, we must turn our attention to the contingencies of everyday life within which such events are produced. As anthropologist James Ferguson convincingly argues, uncritically accepting narratives of the 'failures' of development projects risks ignoring their more complex and often unintended consequences (1994: 254 - 256). In this spirit, this chapter will attempt to draw out the details of this 'failed' edition of a film festival, turning to consider those things - intended or not - that the festival succeeded in achieving.

A Note on Framing the Approach

In keeping with the reflexivity that takes a prominent place within this practice-based approach, I would like to start this account with a reflection on my own practices of writing about and framing the SFF, which have proved particularly challenging. When taking up a study of the SFF, I had initially underestimated the differences between the audiovisual production of Wazi, and the production of a media event. I proceeded on the general assumption that both presented fields of discursive practices which, while notably separate at a level of what they intended to produce, articulated related ideas about the meanings and values of human life amongst Nairobi's various neighbourhoods. However, as it emerged, the SFF turned out to be a far less neat field of study, and orienting my own involvement and practices proved particularly challenging.

In terms of the research practice of writing about the SFF in relation to my current questions and interests, this difficulty in defining the event was experienced in an uncertainty over what particular practices I should determine to be 'event-related' in context

of a film festival, what practices I should exclude, and importantly what practices were beyond my ability to grasp or engage with. In reaching out for some framework through which to start thinking through these questions, I turned to the new body of literature published in the field of film festival studies. However, working through this literature – reading in the evenings after days working amongst members of the SFF – I started to sense an underlying discomfort between how I had chosen to frame and approach my own research, and the kinds of frameworks that film festival studies offered.

Film festival studies generally emerged as a subfield of film studies and, as African film scholar Lindiwe Dovey puts it, has been taken up as an important opportunity to "rematerialize film studies" (2015: 2), a field that has become overly reliant on a method of analysis that finds meaning *within* a filmic text (2015: 10). However, while this is part of an important intellectual shift within film studies toward questions of the "contexts of production, distribution, exhibition and reception" (Dovey 2015: 10), this has not always - especially in earlier work within the field (cf. Turan 2002; de Valck 2007; Wong 2011) - been matched by a similar shift at a presuppositional level. That is to say, while film festival studies certainly marks an important movement of focus from a 'dematerialised text' to 'rematerialised context', this has not necessarily been coupled by a problematisation of the presupposition that *meaning* is essentially *textual*, and can be *read* - whether from text, or *con*text. More recent publications have started to challenge this position by appealing to increasingly complex historical and situational analyses of festivals. Most notable of these has been is Dovey's recent research on African film festivals (2015), work that importantly positions the question of film festivals within the broader and highly politicised field of African film studies. Yet most publications are less clear in their definition of the ontological and epistemological stakes of their research. While this approach may have produced a varied body of insightful research that takes film as its primary unit of intellectual interest (and turns accordingly to questions of film festivals exactly because they are seen as important aspects of film itself), it has proven challenging to marry with my own intellectual presuppositions and interests, which treats meaning as discursively articulated within

unfinalised fields of social and political relations, and pays little direct attention to film content itself.

Fundamentally, film festival studies has for the most part taken film festivals as complex but essentially identifiable 'events'. The festival becomes an object of study, distinguished as a temporally and spatial bounded location in which films, filmmakers, investors, critics, and audiences come together to watch, judge, promote, exhibit, buy, discuss, and discover film. Yet this following study of the SFF proceeds from an entirely different set of interests. While the significance of film festivals from the perspective of film studies is self-evident, it is less evident why we might arrive at the study of a film festival from the perspective of a critique of mediated development. Centrally, the subject that concerns my present study is not an event, but rather the months of planning and organising that lead up to an event: those moments of discursive practices through which the SFF is *produced*, and ideas about its social and cultural benefit are expressed. While this 'event production', as I will show, overflows in the case of the SFF into its screening events themselves, this approach – in an important distinction from the research questions set forth in much film festival studies – never takes the 'festival event' (however layered or complex) as the 'context' of study in its own right.

In an attempt to explore this difference further, I would like to advance this study of the SFF in two phases. The first, worked in this present chapter, will take up this literature in film festival studies, and consider the ways that the SFF can be seen as a film festival operating at the particular juncture of development discourse and the promotion of 'film culture', and the articulation of 'slums' as seemingly definite socioeconomic coordinates within Nairobi. I will focus this chapter around an account of my earlier engagement with the 2012 edition of the SFF between June and August 2012, during which I was involved with the event in a generally more observational, and less practical, capacity. Doing so, I explore the extent to which thinking about the SFF in relation to other studies of film festivals provides a productive framework within which to elaborate upon the SFF's more general features. This approach therefore also hopes to advance some insight into the critical value - and

challenges - of practice-based ethnographic insight within academic literature on film festival studies, as a way of promoting not just a depth of descriptive particularity, but as the basis upon which to rethink how a 'film festival' might be conceptualised and constituted as an object of study in the first place.

However, as I go on ask at the end of this chapter, to what extent does assuming that the SFF is a 'film festival' in any analytically distinct sense (by which I mean, in any way that it can be categorically compared with other film festivals elsewhere) risk removing from our view the dynamics of the event as a congeries of situated articulatory practices that spill beyond this definition? While the idea of a 'film festival' remains a key referent in how the SFF is talked about, imagined, and represented by its facilitators, what other kinds of activities and articulations does it entail? Drawing on these questions, Chapter 6 turns to consider my involvement with the organisation of the 2013 edition of the SFF, during which my research entanglement with the organisation of the event became more pronounced as I took an increasingly central role amongst the festival's event-related practices. In doing so, I elaborate several explorative frameworks – presenting the SFF in relation to practices of 'formalisation' and 'professionalisation' – as a way of extending our understanding of the event beyond its determination as a 'festival'. By distinguishing my approach to the SFF in this way, the intention here is to offer some reflection on how the SFF reveals interesting dynamics of the operation of the culturalisation of development discourse within Nairobi's informal settlements. Furthermore, how in turn can this culturalisation be thought to radiate back outward, contributing to broader discursive articulations of ideas such as the poverty, urbanity, and informality of Nairobi.

First, however, I would like to take the opportunity to specify some of the language used to locate this festival within the discourses of Nairobi, and through this specification make a first step toward an initial framing of a 'film festival' as our object of enquiry.

A Language of Impoverished Space

Some of the language used to designate the special status of urban locations like Mathare and Kibera should be clarified. As will be discussed later, the naming of the 'Slum Film Festival' was contentious. The term 'slum' itself is not particularly common in Mathare or Kibera outside of its use by aid and development organisations, and the SFF was in part named this way because it was judged by its founders that the word 'slum' would present a more appropriate image to potential donors and European embassy partners. Yet the term has several negative connotations, with an etymological root in the Georgian English cant word for a small, dirty back-room in a house, and later associated to the verb 'to slum' as visiting urban slums "for diversion or amusement, often under guise of philanthropy" (Harper 2001).[40] Where such connotations of a 'slum' have been rejected, 'informal settlement' has arisen as a more politically correct phrase. Such 'informal settlements' are defined in the UN-published *Glossary of Environmental Statistics* as unauthorised housing on illegally occupied land (1997: 43). The 'informality' of a human settlement draws attention to the lack of legal recognition of inhabitation and the accorded lack of provision of public services which is the focus of much foreign developmental work done in such areas. This is one of the chosen terms of UN Habitat, which refers to both Kenya's 'slums' and Kibera's 'informal settlements', and whose work focuses on urban land legislation and supporting the development of sanitation and economic infrastructures (Syrjänen 2008).

The shift in language from 'slum' to 'informal settlement' marks a transition away from an almost voyeuristic interest in the details of an area's state of impoverishment, moving our focus instead to the underlying social, economic and political causes of this impoverishment. However the designation of an 'informal settlement' only makes sense in so far as we keep in mind the normative qualities of the 'formal': in the present case, of the Kenyan state's legal designation and treatment of particular parts of Nairobi. What then of

[40] A similar 'guise of philanthropy' lurks behind the neologism of 'poorism' (of poor-tourism), a term increasingly popular amongst Kenyan journalists in Nairobi to describe the new fashion of taking guided bus tours through settlements like Kibera (cf. Frenzel, Steinbrink, & Koens, eds. 2012; Whyte, Selinger & Outterson 2011).

other elements of human life, which are beholden neither to legal informality nor visions of its own poverty? As this chapter illustrates, central to the proposal put forth by the organisers of SFF is the value of film promotion and distribution for building 'other narratives' about life in places like Kibera and Mathare. This cultural interest – encapsulated in the SFF's 2012 slogan "From the slums, by the slums, and for the slum dwellers" – seeks to capture stories and empower voices from outside the dominant conversations of poverty and impoverishment. In this sense, the SFF's use of the word 'slum' poses an interesting contradiction, and offers a first indication of what the SFF's proposed 'cultural engagement' might look like.

It is notable that within Mathare and Kibera themselves, the word 'ghetto' is more popularly used among young artists and filmmakers, taken from the anglophone term with its association to poor North American urban neighbourhoods, and used to signify the rough 'hustler' lifestyles of Nairobi's urban poor (cf. Thieme 2013). Furthermore the term 'ghetto', unlike 'slum' (and 'informal settlement', which is not used locally at all), seems attached to a sense of bravado, spoken with pride and full of the positive associations of surviving despite the odds. When I raised the question of what people local to Mathare actually call their part of the city, Collins Omondi, a 2012 festival organiser who later went on to become the festival's manager in 2013, mockingly thumped his chest and said 'ghetto life'. In a slightly more understated offering, the then head of Slum-TV Kenneth Wendo shrugged-off the same question, and admitted that for the most part it was just 'mbani' – the Swahili for 'home'.

The language we use to describe our cities has boundaries as porous as the borders of those cities it seeks to describe. Part of this study will be concerned with the complex ways in which, in 'dealing with the slum', the SFF in fact articulates the borders and limitations of these locations. As such, I elect here to preserve the term 'slum' for use in exclusive reference to the word as it is manifest in the Slum Film Festival, and the ways that the Festival Managers and organisers speak of 'slum communities'. I will otherwise avoid the designation 'slum' as a general reference to the condition of urban locations. In referring to

the locations of Kibera and Mathare, I will attempt as much as possible to simply refer to them as neighbourhoods and communities, with the assumption of some understanding that these areas of Nairobi are elsewhere often referred to ‘slums’, ‘ghettos’ and ‘informal settlements’. I will also on occasion refer to ‘informal settlements’, yet only in those contexts where the specific economic or infrastructural ‘informality’ of such settlements is in question. This will be the case, for example, in reference to other ‘informal settlements’ around the world, with its general signification of absent state infrastructure and associated genera of human suffering. I will also occasionally refer to ‘ghettos’, however only in a strictly Nairobi-Sheng context in which the term refers to a particular type of pride in the rough, hustler street life of Nairobi.

The Object(ives) of Film Festival Studies

In establishing an initial framework for exploring the SFF as a development funded film event interested in the empowerment of informal ‘slum’ communities, I would like to turn briefly to consider the ways that seemingly related events - such as those positioned in terms of human rights or political activism - have been constituted within the broader context of film festival studies. In doing so, it serves to first provide a brief account of some of the key features of film festival studies more generally.

The study of film festivals initially gained momentum as a ‘material’ branch of the otherwise broadly text-focused field of film and cinema studies. As Dovey puts it, “[t]hrough the ways they convene and produce a variety of public (as well as private) spheres” (2015: 10) film festivals offers film scholars an enticing opportunity to move from textual film criticism toward researching the physical locations in which the dynamics of film and cinema may be subjected to an entirely different set of questions. The resulting research into film festivals has since seen festivals approached as imminently complex and yet increasingly important features of how films are produced, distributed, marketed, and exhibited. From amongst this literature, the earliest reflections on film festivals (Bachmann 1976; Nichols 1994; Lutkehaus 1995; Fehrenbach 1995) have been particularly captivated by the image of an

"international pattern of circulation and exchange" (Nichols 1994: 68) that categorises the special role of film festivals as transitory sites for various forms of economic and cultural exchange. Several locomotive metaphors punctuate this scholarship, encouraging a sense of film festivals as the primary conduit through which films 'belong' to larger social, cultural, and economic dynamics. Documentary film scholar Bill Nichols, in a piece often cited as one of the earliest academic engagements with film festivals, writes of the festival as a place for "the traffic of cinema" (1994: 68), invoking their entanglement with in the busy streets and urban sprawl of the modernist vision at the heart of Nichols' critique. Marijke de Valck, a media scholar and co-founder of the Film Festival Research Network (FFRN), writes relatedly of festivals as "sites of passage" conceptualised as both "nodes in the network" indispensable to the workings of world cinema (2007: 36), and part of elaborate 'rites' for cultural legitimisation (2007: 37). Film studies scholar Dina Iordanova, in the inaugural volume of her Film Festival Yearbook publication series, elects instead for an image of the festival as a complex "circuit" along which films and filmmakers are moved by those "forces that drive the growth of the festival phenomenon within the system of global culture" (Iordanova & Rhyne 2009: 3).

These metaphors and critical strategies have seen film festivals positioned as the locus of film's global and globalising dynamics. In one of the earliest works published in the field, North American film journalist Kenneth Turan (2002) stitches together a narrative across twelve festivals that seeks to elicit "the feeling of festivity" (2002: 4), as well as locate various festivals in what Turan understands as their historical context. While Turan's work lacks the theoretical care of the later contributions of Marijke de Valck (2007), Cindy Wong (2011), Lindiwe Dovey (2015), and from a disciplinary perspective of management studies Alex Fisher (2012), it serves an important departure point for the romanticisation of film festivals as part of a 'film experience'. Yet its blind spots highlight the need and opportunity for greater academic rigour. From Cannes framing itself as antithetical to Hollywood as a second centre in "the movie universe" (2002: 28), to the wild film successes that flow from Sundance (2002: 31), from the 'strangeness' of the fact that Sarajevo should even have a film festival (2002: 89) to the exotic "pantomime" and "choreographed prancing" (2002: 65)

of the opening ceremony of Burkina Faso's FESPACO,[41] Turan gathers personal reflections with which, on his own admission, he attempts "if not for a doctoral thesis, at least for some broad general observations" (2002: 5).

Turan's descriptive text is filled with public spaces that are not quite public. Business back-channels whirl behind the scenes of festival frontage, and eavesdropped conversations, chance encounters and fast paced interviews in foyers and cafes and theatres populate Turan's reflections in what de Valck calls an "informed but essentially popular festival guide" (2007: 33). However, while de Valck goes on to argue that the range of studies under Turan's account "make it clear that film festival events are not unified, closed phenomena" (2007: 33), we might ask what kinds of 'openness' Turan's account in fact permits. As an American journalist, there is an understandable focus in Turan's work on the Euro-American aspects of the 'movie universe'. Yet how this vantage point inflects the way that Turan positions his encounters with other, non-Euro-American festivals is revealing. The layout of Turan's text is broken into three sections, the first of which deals with the 'business agendas' of France's Cannes, and North America's Sundance and ShoWest festivals. The second section then shifts to position festivals in Burkina Faso and the Republic of Cuba as having 'geopolitical agendas'. In a classically orientalising move, Turan conjures images of Ouagadougou and Havana as the place where 'geopolitics happens', and in doing so implicitly reaffirms the Euro-American orientation of the international 'movie universe' to which the rest of the world is reduced to an interesting periphery. This is not to suggest that FESPACO and the Festival of New Latin American Cinema do not maintain strongly political agendas, but rather to comment that within the logic of Turan's analysis, it becomes impossible to question anything else that they might also be.

What is important about the ethnocentrism in Turan's work is not found in the text itself, which remains journalistic and playful enough to be somewhat inoculated against too sustained a critique, but the subtle way that the definition of film festivals that it announces

[41] Festival panafricain du cinéma et de la télévision de Ouagadougou

can be traced through a particular strand of the scholarship on film festivals that has followed. Marijke de Valck's work (2007), extrapolated from her 2006 doctoral thesis on the history of European film festivals, demonstrates one of the most sophisticated continuations of a related project. Here de Valck employs a far more mature set of theoretical tools that moves the study of film festivals into new fields of sociological interrogation. Framing festivals as emerging from their 'European cradle' (2007: 14), de Valck maintains that film festivals offer a research opportunity as a "new object of historical research" (2007: 20), arguing that the analysis of their contemporary successful rise on a global scale reveals features of the "spatial and temporal dimensions of a specific environment" (2007: 18) that provide the agents of "various film cultures … a variety of ways of plugging in" (2007: 18). Framing film festival events as the spatial and temporal location for the complex interaction of both local and global forces, and the bringing together of various agencies, hierarchies and agendas (2007: 41), de Valck is able to present a multi-layered sociological vision of festivals' places within a global society. In order to achieve this, she theorises film festivals in terms of their 'network' of relationships. She defines this notion of a network in relation to actor-network theory, drawing in particular on Bruno Latour's concept of a network as an interrelation of human and nonhuman 'nodes' whose relations are captured in "practices of translation" (Latour 1993: 10-11).

However, while finding some use in Latour's theoretical approach, de Valck holds herself back from committing to its more radical implications. Significantly, she finds her own project of interrogating the 'success' of the film festival network irreconcilable with the anti-systemic 'instability' of Latour's actor-network, in which everything is in "constant circulation" (de Valck 2007: 35). As de Valck goes on to argue, she sees the "international film festival circuit as a primarily *successful* network" (2007: 35; my italics) in which individual festivals are treated as "nodal points in a 'successful' cinema network that originated in Europe" (2007: 15). This definition of a 'network' on de Valck's account is therefore drawn away from the decentering implications of actor-network theory, and is re-stabilised around a measure of 'success' that, as Julian Stringer points out (2010), de Valck never coherently defines. In this way, de Valck can be seen to move away from an

understanding of a network as a critical intervention into concepts of relationality that has profound epistemological consequences, toward the network as a sociological metaphor more indebted to Manuel Castells' notion of the 'network society', composed as it is of centres and their overshadowed peripheries (Castells 1997). De Valck uses this stabilised form of network to launch a theoretically grounded critique of "how power relations on various scales are constituted" and the "more complex, mobile practices of cultural domination" (2007: 41) by Europe that have resulted. However, by assuming a concept of 'success' rooted in a European genealogy of 'the film festival', and by using this measure of success to stabilise the film festival 'network' into a particular set of relations between peripheries and centres, de Valck pre-articulates the very conditions for the 'domination' which her analysis seeks to critique. In this, de Valck fails to acknowledge that 'the network', and 'the successful network', pose fundamentally different questions about the world. Here then we have a totalised ethnocentric formulation, which redoubles its discursive strength through the very act of self-critique; in moving beyond the 'European cradle' of film festivals, we instead re-discover Europe as the naturalised centre of a global network.

This discursive position has stimulated a range of work that sees film festivals as a part of an industry whose dynamics are rooted in Europe and North America. Cindy Wong's (2011) approach from a global cultural studies perspective explores a similarly organised 'globality', in which she spends a chapter analysing the ways that the Hong Kong International Film Festival is able to leverage European markets to promote localised success (2011: 190-222), while unproblematically defining film festivals as "glittering showcases for films and people" (2011: 1). What such approaches might be said to share is a presupposition about the kind of 'globality' which makes film festivals worthy objects of study in the first place. Film festivals are generally taken, in one form or another, as centres for the operation of 'global cinema'; they are positioned as central to how films reach the world, and the world reaches film. The naturalisation at work within this scholarship is therefore precisely the naturalisation of the kind of 'globality' - and centrally, economic and social world view - that is implicated in idea of studying 'film festivals'. While de Valck

reflects Turan's appreciation that film festivals' global multiplicity allows festivals to "open up to an assemblage of performances and agendas" (de Valck 2007: 33), this notion of 'openness' is nevertheless marked by several significant epistemic closures. As such while literature on film festivals has produced detailed and varied accounts of film festivals across the world, there remains a significant opportunity for a rethinking and re-constitution of what a 'festival' is, and how it is imagined to fit within broader social and political dynamics.

An important recent publication that moves beyond this Eurocentric orientation of film festival studies is Lindiwe Dovey's *Curating Africa in the Age of Film Festivals* (2015). In the first manuscript-length publication that takes audiovisual media research from across African contexts as an entry point into the study of film festivals,[42] Dovey not only repositions the geographical focus of film festival studies, but vitally reconstitutes its questions within the framework of political issues of how Africa has been situated, and indeed sidelined within global film markets. In marking her distinction from other studies of African film festivals, Dovey's work seeks to "highlight certain trends in the way 'Africa' has been curated in different contexts, and by different groups of people" (2015: 179). Drawing on fifteen years of working on and researching film and film festivals, Dovey presents a theoretically nuanced account of how 'Africa' relates to film festivals around the world. Her work moves through several orientations of African and international film through various festivals: African filmmakers' inclusions and exclusions from major international festivals like Cannes and Rotterdam; the rise of international film festivals within Africa; the constitution of particular 'African audiences' at Africa-specific film festivals within Africa itself; and the emergence of Africa-specific festivals elsewhere in the world. In this way, Dovey turns a critical gaze on the myriad ways that film festivals are "multi-authored entities, influenced equally by their organizers, their curators, and their 'professional' and 'ordinary' participants" (2015: 177). Furthermore, as a film studies scholar addressing a field of de-materialized textual criticism (2015: 10), Dovey goes on to point out that "the meanings of films are contingent on the context in which they are shown … coauthored by their filmmakers *and* spectators" (2015: 177). In this way, Dovey recognises the

[42] The only other manuscript-length publications specially on African film festivals both focus primarily on Burkina Faso's FESPACO (Bikales 1997; Dupre 2012)

significance of film festivals not as simple sites of 'transfer' and 'exchange' within bustling global cinema economies and professional networks, but as complex sites within which the meanings of film are themselves produced.

Human Rights and Activist Festivals

This de-centring of the economic and occidental narratives of film festival research marks out a more progressive strand of film festival research in which festivals are treated as complex sites of human activity that quickly exceed any strict analytical definition. It is in the tradition of this more open and nuanced treatment of film festivals that studies of 'activist' or 'human rights' festivals have emerged. Dina Iordanova and Leshu Torchin, in their edited volume exploring issues of political activism within film festivals (2012), provide a useful introductory approach to thinking about how programmes for social and political change are encoded within film festivals and their screening programmes. Drawing on contributions from a range of film scholars and film festival organisers, Iordanova and Torchin present a series of reflections on what Iordanova calls "social concern festivals" (2009: 31). Looking at festivals promoting films that focus on human rights advocacy, chapters such as Torchin's 'Networked for Advocacy' interrogate the dissemination of 'testimonial' film – defined as the use of film for the "truthful first-person narration of suffering to transform the world" (2012: 1) – as a form of political advocacy exercised through film festival curation. Torchin argues that the "testimonial encounter between viewer and screen" (2012: 11) that festivals facilitate make them "a place where activism can take place" (2012: 10). Torchin sees the transformative expectations that run through the core of politicised, activist film festivals as problematic, yet highly revealing. As Iordanova expands, within such moments of "testimonial encounter" the dynamics for "winning over further supporters" and improving "public understanding" (2012: 13) are captured in events which provide a "much needed narrative backdrop for activist-work" (2012: 14). The activist potential of public gatherings for the dissemination of 'testimonial' films, on these accounts, interweaves political sentiment with the priorities of activist organisers, positioning film festivals as an important tool with which activists can 'reveal' truth and expand public awareness of their particular causes.

Theorised as part political manifestation, part promotion of facilitating organisations and their causes, such 'social concern festivals' are positioned very differently to the ethnocentric accounts found in Turan (2002) and de Valck (2007). While Turan and de Valck see the globality of film festivals as more or less organised around Euro-American ideas of a film's economic and cultural success, Torchin and Iordanova's work introduces an appreciation of a professional activist film festivals whose 'global' relationships are constituted by concepts of ethics and humanistic political principals. In her contribution to the volume Mariagiulia Grassilli, director of Italian festival Human Rights Nights, reflects idealistically on how her event provides a "neutral site for encounters" between film professionals, becoming the "centre of a network of local-global relations focused on human rights" (Grassilli 2012: 40). Yet while Torchin and Iordanova seek to complicate this 'neutrality' through an appeal to the need to "go beyond the simplistic formulation that if people see something, they will do something" (2012: 104), their treatment of 'social concern festivals' nevertheless persistently privileges the meaningfulness of a relationship between political film content and the 'activated' and politicised spectator. While they promote a hopeful direction for future research, this approach proves ultimately unable to escape the 'effects model' of political communication that seeks to 'activate' political feeling through the encounter between spectator and screen.

In a critique of Iordanova and Torchin, Dovey points out the "automatic connection" (2015: 171) that they assume to operate between film festivals, human rights films, and a concept of testimony as a "transformative 'speech act'" (Iordanova & Torchin 2012: 1). Reflecting on her time visiting the FiSahara Film Festival[43] – an annual film festival that takes place in the Dakhla refugee camp in Southern Algeria and focuses on the dispossession of the Sahrawi people from the Western Sahara – Dovey puts forth a useful distinction between Iordanova and Torchin's human rights festival, and an 'activist film festival'. Such activist festivals Dovey defines as those festivals in which an emphasis is placed on "the creation of meaning and history in a specific place amongst people who are gathered live" (Dovey 2015: 171). What Dovey provides is an understanding of activist film festivals not as simple

[43] 'Festival Internacional de Cine del Sahara'.

occasions for screening ‘activist film’, but as historically and socially located activist events in and of themselves. Unlike the social concern festivals of Iordanova and Torchin, which are often hosted at locations far removed from the humans whose rights they seek to benefit, FiSahara is located within a refugee camp populated by Sahrawi people whose dispossession resonates strongly with its schedule of “intense films about people’s struggles against oppression in different parts of the world” (2015: 174). The very act of participating in the festival becomes an act of activist solidarity. In this way, Dovey advances a movement away from festivals as the purveyors of ‘human rights’ messages, and toward an account of film festivals as situated moments of political or social activism – moments that Dovey sees as demonstrating a form of “*sensus communis*” (2015: 176), which she understands as the kind of consensus arising from common/shared experience.

In both Torchin and Iordanova’s work, and in Dovey’s refinement, the question of activism amongst film festivals directly concerned with human rights raises issues of the incitement of change, the galvanisation of political feeling, and the contextually specific nature of the political and cultural impact and relevance of film. Dovey’s advancement is the recognition that, when reflecting on such activism, we cannot restrict our thinking to films alone. Furthermore, Dovey’s account shifts our attention away from the universalism and essentialism of individualistic human ‘rights’, toward activism as historically and socially located moments of struggle. Festivals themselves might therefore be, on particular occasions such as FiSahara, seen as ‘live’ political events that take place within the context of broader activist movements. With this distinction in mind, the subsequent question then becomes to what extent the Slum Film Festival - as a film festival with a broadly developmental premise - might be thought of as an ‘activist’ or ‘human rights’ festival, and in what sense?

The SFF was first conceptualised as a way to bring films made by Africans to audiences in informal settlements, and later as a platform for the dissemination of the work of local filmmakers. It became, over time, a festival attempting to promote and celebrate ‘slum stories’ about ‘slum life’. Taking place in well known outdoor communal areas within Kibera

and Mathare, the SFF primarily screens short films made by local filmmakers about their communities, while supplementing these with longer feature films that the organisers have determined to be in some way related to life in slums. As an event taking place within its supposed beneficiary slum communities, and attempting to organise screenings of films that constructively engage with 'slum life', the SFF initially seems to resonate closely with Dovey's exploration of FiSahara as an activist film festival. However, where FiSahara is focused around issues of land rights, oppression and political solidarity, the SFF's treatment of 'slums' as the root of its activist investment produces some immediate and very interesting differences.

Primarily, if the SFF seeks to advocate for and raise awareness about 'slum' life while hosting its event within informal communities, exactly whose awareness is it seeking to raise? Presumably people living within Kibera and Mathare – the festival's primary beneficiaries – are already fully aware of what life in a slum is like. In a related ambition, the SFF also seeks to bring quality audiovisual content into the informal settlements where it operates, displaying such films on big screens within communities with little or no access to cinema.[44] Here then the SFF might be seen to be acting as a project for the activist proliferation of quality film, a kind of 'film activism' that seeks to spread 'film culture' - however films which are in some way related to the theme of a 'slum'. Another common thought amongst the SFF organising committee is the idea that the event also serves to promote local slum-based filmmakers and encourage young filmmakers by offering awards, film training workshops, and public screenings of their work. Here then, activism takes on a third form, as the festival moves from being a site for the stimulation of awareness and social change, to a service oriented project to help promote slum-based filmmakers. As I will go on to explore, the SFF demonstrates all three of these interwoven objectives, exercised at different times and emerging in different ways throughout its life. The SFF's interchangeable focus – promoting filmmakers from slums and/or films about slums; encouraging a film-viewing culture; and offering awards and professional exposure to young filmmakers – while at the same time satisfying the requirements of donors and

[44] Although both neighbourhoods are rich in viewing halls: spaces, often set up by entrepreneurs, that screen television shows, films, and football matches.

'development cooperation' partners, hints at some of the complexities that emerge from its dual existence as both a film festival and a development project.

In a final central observation, it should be noted that despite their difference of approach, both Torchin and Iordanova, and Dovey's accounts foreground the film festival 'event': the screenings, the interaction between viewer and film, the atmosphere of festivity and community, the convergence of filmmakers and activists. In a marked distinction, this present study foregrounds instead the organisational practices and processes and the interpersonal relations involved in producing the Slum Film Festival. This focus on elements of the production of a film festival that preceded and extend beyond its 'event' has taken an increasingly central place in studies of film festivals that seek more complex accounts of how these events come about, most notable of which being Alex Fischer's humorous and insightful study of 'film festival management' (Fischer 2013). However, this focus on the production of film festivals has been largely overlooked in the study of activist festivals. While scholarship has focused on film festival events as sites for activism and political exchange, less has been asked about the articulatory practices through which such activism is itself produced. In taking up this challenge, this present study of the SFF turns toward an enquiry of how ideas of 'the slum' and its political and social location within Nairobi are articulated through the production of a film festival imagined as 'from, by and for' slum communities. In exploring these issues, I will now introduce the organisation and concept of the SFF in more detail, before moving on to look at the organisational practices through which the SFF 2012 was produced as a 'developmental event'. In doing so I will draw on this language of activism in film festivals, seeking to contribute to the small yet significant body of literature that has started to complicate and increasingly situate 'film festivals' as objects of critical enquiry.

Background: Hot Sun Foundation, Slum-TV, and the SFF Project

The Slum Film Festival was first established in 2011 by Federico Olivieri in his capacity as the Cultural Attaché of the Spanish Embassy in Kenya. The project was launched with the

support of AECID (Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation), whose primary mandate is to "foster full development, conceived as a fundamental human right, with the fight against poverty as part of the process for building this right" ("AECID", aecid.es). The initial idea of the festival, according to Olivieri, was to provide exposure to cultural events amongst communities in Nairobi with the least disposable income. The project was launched as a partnership with two media-based NGOs working out of two separate 'slums' in Nairobi, Hot Sun Foundation and Slum-TV. The Hot Sun Foundation, originally established by former Australian Deputy High Commissioner in Nairobi Jim Lindsey and his wife Pamela Collett, is based in the south-west Nairobi neighbourhood of Kibera, and runs the Kibera Film School and Kibera TV. It receives its primary funding from Belgian government initiative Africalia.[45] In a common legal formation amongst media NGOs,[46] the Hot Sun Foundation is also paired with the for-profit Hot Sun Films production company. The for-profit Hot Sun Films is primarily overseen by Pamela Collett's son, North American filmmaker Nathan Collett, and Kenyan producer Mercy Murugi. The short film *Kibera Kid* (2006) and the feature length *Togetherness Supreme* (2010) were both productions by Hot Sun Films that successfully leveraged its access in Kibera via the Foundation.

The Hot Sun Foundation's production studio and film school sit down one of the main roads that feed the northern part of Kibera, amongst the more affluent concrete buildings of an otherwise sprawling neighbourhood of corrugated iron and mud houses. While only two permanent staff are funded at the Foundation, an accountant and an overall project manager, the Hot Sun offices are regularly filled with young Kiberans, either participants of ongoing film training classes or the school's recent graduates seeking employment whenever production opportunities arise. This impermanent crew of subsistence filmmakers suits Hot Sun's name, whose Swahili translation 'jua kali' is a popular colloquialism for

[45] Africalia is a non-profit initiative launched in 2000 by the Belgian government's Development Cooperation programme, with the initial mandate of promoting and distributing African cultural products within Belgium. In 2007 they transitioned into cultural organisation focused on promoting "sustainable human development by supporting African culture and contemporary art" ("Africalia in Brief", africalia.be).

[46] The Cultural Video Foundation had a similar arrangement through its sister organisation CVP (Cultural Video Productions), which managed profitable rights and contracts that arose from CVF's work, giving the production group the opportunity to shift between functioning as a profitable and non-profit organisation.

Kenya's informal sector of labourers who, as Steve Daniels puts it, "make do" the best they can (Daniels 2010). Yet beyond this purely economic meaning, as Joyce Nyairo (2007) points out, this of metaphor of 'jua kali' equally highlights the "creative impetus of cultural life in modern Africa" (2007: 128). Where this metaphor of the 'hot sun' indicates in part those difficult conditions of informal labour in Kenya, the Hot Sun Foundation draws on this image as a way to elicit the 'informality' of Kibera's economy while guided by a mission statement focused on "social transformation through art and media" and development of the technical skills required for "youth talent in East Africa to tell their stories on film" ("Home", hotsunfoundation.org). The 'hot sun' is here transformed from the cause of hardship amongst the disenfranchised into an emblem for progress and social transformation amongst the economically 'informal'.

Slum-TV, the SFF's other facilitating partner, is a media NGO based out of a small office off Mlango Kubwa, a major thoroughfare between Mathare and downtown Nairobi that constitutes one of the busiest regions of the administrative district of Eastlands. Slum-TV was established in 2006 by Kenyan/British artist Sam Hopkins as a local media production group, presenting itself as a "grassroots media collective providing a means of expression to informal settlement communities in Kenya" that seeks to "use film as an empowerment and development tool" while "raising awareness nationally and internationally about the lives of informal dwellers" ("Know about us", slum-tv.org). As with Hot Sun, Slum-TV is provided with core funding from Africalia. This funding allows Slum-TV to employ a small group of permanent staff, in exchange for which the group is mandated to produce three short films per year, and run a filmmakers training centre for the Mathare community. In addition to this central group, and similar to the 'jua kali' media freelancers that congregate around Hot Sun, Slum-TV is composed of approximately ten other unsalaried members who comprise the bulk of the group's 'media collective', making themselves available for work in the hope of securing a line on future production budgets.

With both sharing a core funding source provided by Africalia – an initiative whose tagline reads "Culture is Development" – Hot Sun and Slum-TV correspondingly draw on the

narrative power of film to support the production of representations of life in ghettos and slums. These stories seek, according to both organisations, to go beyond the overwhelmingly negative connotations associated with slums, and to try to capture positive stories of life in informal communities. However a review of their productions reveals a body of work which in fact often depicts local infrastructural shortcomings, such as issues of sanitation (*Water Crisis*, 2009) and medical health (*Disabled*, 2010), stories about the dangers of criminal life (*Kibera Kid*, 2006), mythologies about the treatment of HIV (*Brave*, 2012), and sexual assault and rape (*Cycles of Despair*, 2010). This repertoire is occasionally tempered with short soap-opera style family or romantic dramas (*Mathare Highway 2*, 2009; *Step Mother*, 2011). Both organisations, while engaged in forms of media production, are simultaneously invested in the promotion of strong social messages that address the realities of slum life as perceived from a developmental perspective concerned with the need for social and 'infrastructural' (or 'formal') change.

One key difference in how the two groups approach this similar goal can be found in the kind of idealised social structures their organisations seek to emulate. Hot Sun is organised largely like a business, with a strong focus on the nurturing of 'youth talent' and harnessing 'untapped potential' that demonstrates a logic geared toward the maximisation of professionalism and profit. Their film *Togetherness Supreme* (2010) was marketed as a film that helped promote social and ethnic cohesion in Kibera after the election violence in 2008. Yet, as social activist Abdul Kassim commented in Kibera during the film's release in 2010, the promotion of the film was so intense and its actual distribution so non-existent he had mistaken the film's poster for another religious positive-message campaign, failing to realise that it was a movie at all.[47] Hot Sun also has a reputation for being highly protective of its copyright. As one film school trainer mentioned (on condition of anonymity) during a conversation at an SFF screening in 2013, all rights to any films developed by participants at the film school are owned exclusively by the Foundation, an apparent contention amongst its students and participants.

[47] Personal communication while I was teaching a course on how to use social media at his Kibera-based girl's school, the Kibera Girl's Soccer Academy, in 2010.

Slum-TV, conversely, represent themselves as a 'media collective' that promotes itself as a group for 'grassroots action'. Their work focuses less on dramatisation and more on social documentary, and they have no profitable counter-part through which to raise budgets for larger scale productions. One effect of this distinction is a difference in how Hot Sun and Slum-TV codify 'social activism' within their audiovisual productions and organisational processes. Where Hot Sun seeks to capitalise upon their engagement with Kibera, using the 'slum' as a way to generate interesting and sellable stories, Slum-TV is able to be more directly antithetical toward 'NGO approaches', preferring instead to synthesise ideas of 'culture', 'art' and the testimonial power of audiovisual media. In this way, Sam Hopkins – Slum-TV's founder and director – has integrated the Slum-TV audiovisual production platform with his own work in artistic curation. This integration has led to the creation of projects such as the *Kids Are Kings* (2012), a "rearticulation" from a Mathare-perspective of the archival material from a French community television project from the 1970s that was screened as part of an audiovisual exhibition by London-based curator Gail Pickering ("Kids are Kings", slum-tv.blogspot.co.uk). Similarly Slum-TV's *Upgradation* (2010) production – an audiovisual mashup of soap-opera clips and comic strips that sought to reflect on "complex slum economies and power relations" through a depiction of a slum-development project (Pinther et al. 2012: 206) – emerged from Hopkins' broader involvement in the Afropolis project: a series of exhibitions and eventually a publication (Pinther et al. 2012) that sought to "examine Africa's major cities under the microscope" (2012: 11). While this position of Slum-TV as a collaborative project for video-art production has resulted in it producing far fewer audiovisual productions than Hot Sun, it has seemingly opened itself to a greater range of narrative approaches, often moving beyond the community news reporting and local storytelling that occupies Hot Sun.

If the organisational or institutional 'cultures' of Hot Sun or Slum-TV can be spoken about in any meaningful way, it is in terms of how the different ambitions and interests of its founders resulted in the arrangement of seemingly similar projects around very different core values. In the case of Hot Sun, this can be seen in the bringing together of film training and activism with Hot Sun Films director Nathan Collet's ambition for profitability and

commercial-scale production. Alternatively, with Slum-TV this same film-based training and community activism idea corresponds more closely with Hopkins' interests in video-art production. It was in partnership with these two organisations, and their complex coordination of media production and 'social transformation' within Nairobi, that Federico Olivieri first brainstormed and eventually established the pilot edition of the Slum Film Festival in 2011. According to Olivieri, his first idea for the festival was to organise screenings of well known African films in Nairobi's slums in an attempt to expose film-deprived communities to quality African filmmaking. Given the proliferation of DVD rental libraries and video halls throughout Nairobi's informal settlements,[48] Olivieri's initial idea was suggestive of the promotion of a particular type of 'film culture', rather than simply promoting film viewing in general; a film culture that resonated with the professional interests of Olivieri as a European 'cultural operator' in Nairobi. Rather than the Jean-Claude Van Damme films, football league matches and (once the sun sets) pornography that is common in viewing halls in Kibera, Olivieri wanted to promote viewings of films by African filmmakers more resonant with the selections of 'Festival de Cine Africano de Córdoba' (FCAT),[49] an African film festival based in Spain with which Olivieri had also worked.

However, after presenting his idea during a meeting with Mercy Murugi and Josphat Keya of Hot Sun, and Kenneth Wendo of Slum-TV, it was decided instead that the SFF should promote films made by filmmakers living in slum communities, amongst which would be included films from Hot Sun and Slum-TV's respective film schools. This initial redirection in the function of the festival, which took place in the year prior to my involvement with the festival and was reported to me second-hand by Olivieri and Wendo, marks an important shift in the SFF away from the promotion of film in communities supposedly without access to film, toward the promotion of filmmakers working within informal settlements who are making stories about their lives in the 'ghetto'. This therefore marked an early alignment of the SFF with the aforementioned complex coordination between audiovisual narration and

[48] While working in Kibera in 2010, I personally visited 162 different video halls, often little more than small rooms equipped with a CTR television and old sofas repurposed as cinema seating.

[49] This festival was originally located in Tarifa, Spain.

social activism implicit in the work on Slum-TV and Hot Sun Foundation, and its implicit judgments about what kinds of film narratives demonstrate appropriately 'socially transformative' qualities. The SFF moved from being a festival featuring African films, to a festival for films about slums, and in particular those made by slum-based filmmakers.

Finally, in situating the SFF it is worth noting that the title of the 'Slum Film Festival' is fairly distinctive amongst the naming of festivals elsewhere. As pointed out in my earlier co-publication (Dovey, McNamara & Olivieri 2013), the majority of major festival titles often identify either their city or nation of origin, and in doing so mark at once a simultaneous celebration of filmmaking and the places in which this celebration occurs. Events like Cannes, Berlinale, and the Durban International Film Festival articulate their host cities as much as they celebrate particular strands in international filmmaking. As Charlotte Deflassieux-Viguier,[50] head of French Embassy's co-facilitation of the 'Kenya International Film Festival', put it during a meeting about the future of film festivals in Nairobi: "any serious city must have its film festival" (Deflassieux-Viguier, *personal conversation*, 10 September 2013).[51] However, while the term 'slum' shares the geographical focus of such titles, its is marked by a lack of an actual locational specificity. The term 'slum' does not denote a specific location, but rather functions to signify a 'state of locatedness': a category for a series of qualities with which a particular neighbourhood can be identified as a specific urban location. It suggests a community joined together by its relative existence in, or concern with, an 'informal' and 'slum' environment. A review of the appendix of Iordanova and Torchin's volume *Film Festival and Activism* (2012) reveals certain useful alternative categorisations closer aligned to this issue-based titling. Human Rights Film Festivals seem to often adorn themselves with their institutional associations (for example, the 'Amnesty International Film Festival', or 'United Nations Association Film Festival') or with humanitarian or activist slogans ('Global Peace Film Festival', 'Take One Action Film

[50] Charlotte Deflassieux-Viguier was acting 'Audiovisual and Media Cooperation Attaché for East Africa' with the Embassy of France in Kenya, during a three year Embassy posting between 2010 and 2013. The Embassy was directly involved with the Kenyan Film Commission in facilitating the 'Kenya International Film Festival'.

[51] This conversation between Federico Olivieri and Charlotte Deflassieux-Viguier was held at the Alliance Française, and its purpose was to discuss the French Embassy's future plans for cooperating with the Kenyan government's Kenya Film Commission (KFC) after the withdrawal of the governments' support of the Kenya International Film Festival in 2012.

Festival', 'Movies That Matter', 'Persistence Resistance', 'Nationality: Human'). This is in marked difference to so-called 'indigenous' film festivals, which often locate in their titles the culture, nation, or ethnicity which they celebrate (Iordanova 2012: 281-295). The 'slum' interestingly straddles these signifying categories, suggesting a 'community' as a homogenous group of people united by a shared experience of poverty or abject living conditions.

By labelling their event as a 'slum' festival, the founders of the SFF were therefore engaged in more than simply spatially locating the festival within Nairobi. They furthermore actively situated it within the particularly contentious intersection of 'culture' and 'development'. The festival became, in the words of the SFF's Festival Director for Kibera Josphat Keya, "an inspiring platform for the promotion of the young talented artists from the slums" (Josphat Keya, *Opening Words at the SFF Closing Ceremony,* 13 August 2012). This focus on 'youth' or 'the young', a common target group for development projects working in informal settlements, might be seen to indicate a modernist and broadly economic preoccupation in a country which has traditionally seen society centred around the wisdom of the elderly.[52] Richard Lakes, working on northern and southern America, likens this youth-focus to a model for medical diagnosis, which "identifies, isolates, and then treats the subject in order to restore him or her to good health, meaning adjustment to the dominant culture" (1996: 17). In the Kenyan context, this 'dominant culture' seems related to economic modernist ideas of productivity and economic contribution, with youth often presented in terms of economic growth, employment and their value to emerging markets (cf. Kanyari & Namusonge 2013; Zepeda et al. 2013). If the SFF is to be seen as the organisation of a programme for 'giving voice' to people living within slums, it should therefore be anticipated as a *particular type* of voice (the creative, artistic, or testimonial), given to particular types of people (specifically, the modern economic category of 'youth') within the particular articulatory conditions of 'informal' spaces (as those that have been neglected by the state and are preceded by certain unifying narratives of suffering and poverty).

[52] Kenyan philosopher Henry Odera Oruka defends 'sagacious' reasoning within traditional Kenyan communities as located primarily around elders within rural Kenyan communities (Oruka 1990).

It is at the axis of these perspectives – between Olivieri's initial proposal in the context of Spanish Embassy's cultural investment in 'development cooperation', Hot Sun Foundation's body of work seeking 'social transformation' and Slum-TV's vision of audiovisual media as a 'development tool' – that the SFF eventually emerged in August 2011 as a week long event offering free outdoor screenings in Kibera and Mathare of films 'from, by, and for' slum communities. From the very outset, therefore, the correspondence between 'culture' and 'development' within the SFF can be seen to be contested. In turning from promoting film-viewing culture within informal settlements, toward establishing a programme for promoting films and filmmakers from such settlements, the SFF importantly shifted from a treatment of the slum as a spatial location, to the treatment of 'the slum' as an aesthetic, moral, and social thematic. These early discussions on the transformation of the ideas behind the SFF saw the event become increasingly focused on the generation of what Olivieri calls a 'slum filmography': a body of visual and narrative representations of life in slums, and stories by filmmakers living and working within informal settlements. However, the extent to which this pronounced social function of the SFF was exercised during the event itself remains open to investigation and critique. While the concept of the festival solidified, what groups of people and what groups of ideas were promoted in practice during the event requires a more careful consideration. I will now seek to present some of the details of the procession of events during the SFF 2012 in an effort to establish a better basis for understanding how this intersection of film promotion and development discourse contribute to the articulation of 'culture' in Nairobi's informal settlements.

Generating a Slum Filmography: between two ghettos

Federico Olivieri and I sat together on the rooftop terrace of a cafe at the Yaya Centre, one of Nairobi's older shopping malls located along the main bus route that connects Kibera to downtown Nairobi. This area around Ngong Road – a primary thoroughfare along the south western edge of the city – is home to several such centres, the cafes of which frequently serve as meeting places for people working on, if not necessarily *in*, Kibera. It was March 2012, and Olivieri was excitedly explaining his new slum-based film festival project. In

exchange he quizzed me on my doctorate, interested in the idea of academic research and curious about my other work in Nairobi. Neither of us were surprised that we shared many mutual contacts, as this was almost always the case when meeting other foreigners working around media and development in the city. When I expressed an interest in possibly studying the festival as part of my research, there was no hesitation from Olivieri in welcoming me onboard, and over the next few days he introduced me by email to the festival team. I returned to Nairobi several months later and got involved in the preparation of the SFF 2012, working primarily from the offices of Slum-TV.

The inaugural 2011 edition of the SFF had been, Olivieri explained, a success. The donors were impressed, the screenings were effective, and the project showed every sign of being viable. Although reconfirmation of funding had been slow to arrive, Olivieri eventually secured continued support from the Spanish Embassy, with Hot Sun and Slum-TV bringing together in-kind support from media NGO Film Aid International and French cultural centre Alliance Française. When I joined Slum-TV and Hot Sun for the organisation of the 2012 edition of the SFF, everything seemed to be on track for a second successful year. And at the heart of the project was Olivieri's vision of building a 'slum filmography', a body of films for public screening which simultaneously brought slum life to the big screen, and introduced quality African filmmaking to communities of viewers living in informal settlements. Furthermore, Olivieri's broader ambition for the SFF was to eventually extend the screenings to locations beyond Kibera and Mathare, first moving into other neighbourhoods within Nairobi, and gradually into slums throughout Africa and potentially across the world. Olivieri's longterm vision, should the festival prove a success, was to establish a replicable film event that exposed slum communities to quality filmmaking while at the same time supporting and encouraging slum-based filmmakers, with each festival running at the same time, and all simultaneously screening the same schedule of films.

What I take this 'slum filmography' to signify is the history of accumulated screenings, through which the identity of the SFF is in part consolidated. If a key feature of an activist film festival's transformative potential is the testimonial encounter between films and

audiences (cf. Iordanova & Torchin 2012), the SFF's slum filmography might therefore be seen as a key articulation of the festival's transformative and testimonial ambition. In order to think through the SFF at the nexus of the developmental and cultural, it would make sense therefore to review the emergence of this filmography, and establish a sense of the kinds of narratives that the event is constituted around. This, at least, was one of my guiding interests when I joined in with the organisation of the SFF between June and September 2012. Yet as a new event, there was no large back catalogue of film screenings for review, and there was only an incomplete and unclear record of the 2011 screenings. Rather than long list of films from previous screenings, this 'filmography' was instead an ongoing and live conversation amongst festival organisers around questions of what kinds of film should be promoted, what qualities should be valued, and what narratives should be prioritised. In short, there was *no* filmography, only a desire to create one, and the recognition of its importance as part of the identity of the project.

As became readily apparent, establishing an understanding of this filmography would not be as simple as cataloguing the kinds of films the SFF sought to promote. In practice, the selection of films was beholden to a more complicated set of contingencies. Primary amongst these was the fact that Olivieri – who personally oversaw the festival's management in 2011 – was himself away during the organisation of the 2012 edition due to the expiry of his post as Cultural Attaché to the Spanish Embassy. As a result, the management of the SFF was divided between Josphat Keya and Roy Okello from Hot Sun Foundation, and Kenneth Wendo and Collins Omondi from Slum-TV. This division of management between Hot Sun and Slum-TV quickly formed the grounds for antagonism in terms of how the SFF was to be run, how the screenings were to be organised, and what films were to be screened in each location. The SFF's 'slum filmography', it was to emerge, corresponded less directly with ideals about what the SFF *should* be, and introduces us instead to the vying interests, ambitions and imaginaries of what the SFF's facilitating partners hoped to get out of the event for themselves.

The technical and logistical details for SFF 2012 had mostly been carried forward from the preceding year, including the use of submission forms, emailing lists, partners for the provision of the screens and projectors, and permissions and security arrangements with locals from screening locations in Kibera and Mathare. Yet while early August screenings were well planned, by late July 2012 nobody at Slum-TV – who were responsible for the Mathare screening event – had any information on what films had been selected for that year's screenings. The initial reason for this absence of scheduled films at Slum-TV was that the call for submissions of films for SFF 2012 was only made at the end of June 2012, just over a month before the launch of the festival's main screening events. Submissions for the SFF 2012 had been aggregated by the Hot Sun, on the agreement that they would later share the submissions with Slum-TV for communal review and approval. However, by 25 July 2012 only a few of the festival's submitted films had been received by Slum-TV, and all the main selections had already been made for each submission category. Furthermore, 'non-qualifying' films – films that Hot Sun had determined were either too short, or not submitted in the right format – had already been excluded. It was also noted by Slum-TV members that all films selected in the 'Drama' category were submissions from students of the Kibera Film School, which is itself run by Hot Sun. Collins Omondi and Kenneth Wendo felt that this an indication of how Hot Sun wanted to take charge of the festival and exclude Slum-TV. This triggered a heated argument at the Slum-TV offices, in which it was generally agreed that Hot Sun were "pushing their own agenda over the festival agenda" (Collins Omondi, *SFF meeting at Slum-TV*, 25 July 2012).

Speaking to Josphat Keya and Roy Okello at Hot Sun, they attributed this oversight to an overstretched budget and indicated a general communication breakdown between the two groups (*SFF management meeting*, 7 August 2012). Either way, it was not until 30 July 2012 that Collins Omondi finally received a full list of all submissions that had been made to the SFF. As a possible solution to the issue of Hot Sun's pre-determination of the film submissions, Kenneth Wendo suggested that the Slum-TV group re-review all submissions and compile their own approved list. However nobody at Slum-TV was willing to undertake this work. Despite the argument of the preceding week, Collins Omondi met with Roy

Fig. 5.1 – SFF 2012 Official Film Screening Schedule.

Okello and Josphat Keya on 2 August 2012 to synchronise the approved list of submissions to be screened between Mathare and Kibera, leaving them unchanged from Hot Sun's original selection. At first I judged that the disinterest by Slum-TV in altering the approved schedule was due a general lack of time before the launch of the festival. However, in a later email to their partners at FilmAid International about the pending screenings, the Slum-TV team in fact devised a revised festival programme for their Mathare screening schedule which included several key changes to take place without Hot Sun's knowledge. Kenneth Wendo, Collins Omondi and the Slum-TV team had in fact simply decided to sidestep Hot Sun and take control of their own programming. Amongst these changes was the removal of many of Hot Sun's own films, such as *Miss Nobody* (2011), *Step Mother* (2011), and *Kibera Kid* (2006), replacing them with films selected from FilmAid International's body of social documentaries on rural Kenya, including *Nipe Nafasi* (2011) and *My Cry* (2011). As Kenneth Wendo went on to explain, these changes to the Mathare schedule were also an attempt to please FilmAid International, whose Nairobi programme director Victor Ombonya had recently fallen out with Hot Sun Film's Nathan Collett. The result of this change to the planned schedule was a drifting apart of the proposed festival programme between its two locations, and the effective emergence of two separate festival events in place of a single, coordinated festival organised around a single shared 'slum filmography'.

While an official single festival programme was eventually approved by both groups and published in the run up to the event, it was a largely inaccurate representation of what the teams at Slum-TV and Hot Sun in fact intended to screen at their respective locations. What the approved schedule announces is a collection of films about life in a Nairobi slum, with a 'drama' category populated almost entirely by submissions from the Kibera Film School, and covering moral and informational spins on topics of domestic life (*Step Mother*), crime (*The Cycle*), sexism (*Miss Nobody*), or AIDS (*Brave, The Medicine*). These were to be interspersed with films whose narratives are less directly concerned with the hardships and poverty of life in slums, such as the animated *The Legend of the Ngong Hills* (2011), a Maasai origin myth of Nairobi's Ngong Hills, and the experimental *Kichwateli*

(2011), a story of a young boy from a Nairobi slum who undergoes a short urban odyssey when his head turns into a television set. The schedule also included longer productions, such as NGO S.A.F.E's *Ndoto za Elibidi* (2010), a comedy about a family overcoming AIDS stigma, Hot Sun Film's *Kibera Kid* (2006) and *Togetherness Supreme* (2010), both of which focus on how friendship can overcome violence and adversity in Kibera, and Hawa Essuman's *Soul Boy* (2010), the story of a young Kiberan boy who embarks on a journey to save his father's soul. While these productions may vary in terms of audiovisual quality, running time, and particular narrative focus, the SFF's scheduled films were predominantly productions with strong moral or educational messages, variously organised around issues identifiable in relation to the material conditions of life in informal settlements.

In this sense, the SFF's official screening schedule evidences the event's somewhat unclear and possibly even antagonistic relation to its own stated intention of promoting a diversity of voices and stories about life in slums and of breaking with overly negative stereotypes of slums as places of crime and poverty. Some elements of this polyvocalist ambition are exercised in the inclusion of *Kichwateli* and *The Legend of the Ngong Hills,* whose playful styles are notably absent of strongly moral or proselytising narratives. In a related sense, feature film *Ndoto za Elibidi* (2010), while primarily concerned with overcoming AIDS stigma, switches between live-action film and recordings of a S.A.F.E community theatre production, often displacing its own educational agenda with a story about romance and family tragedy. Similarly, *Soul Boy* (2010) tells the story of a young boy's personal courage in the face of adversity and often shies away from an overtly educational narrative. Yet while these moments might arguably open the festival's filmographic dialogue with 'the slum' to alternative representations and new narrative perspectives on life in informal settlements, many of the scheduled films persistently place the problems of slum life – whether healthcare, sanitation, education, crime or violence – in a central position within their stories. Importantly, this persistent educational focus did not seem to be the result of any expressed desire or distinction amongst festival organisers. This seemed instead far more related to certain pragmatic realities about what sorts of films were available. There is in this sense a notable blurring within the SFF's approved

screening schedule, between a body of films that open new imaginaries for what life in a slum is, and educational films that re-inscribe negative narratives about slums in order to point out an ignorance or adversity to be overcome.

This blurring of the SFF filmography might be understood as an important contradiction within the festival's discourse over its treatment of 'the slum' as its primary and organising focus. In the first instance, the SFF 2012 filmography partly seeks to 'correct the record' of negative depictions of slums by promoting alternative representations of life in informal settlements. However in actuality many of the films about slums were interested in illuminating more traditional depictions of struggle in informal settlements, seeking to educate viewers about the risks of crime, or the dangers of taboos over AIDS. In this latter sense, the SFF 'slum filmography' repositions the event as a 'human rights film festival' in the sense that Iordanova and Torchin suggest, drawing on "transformative expectations" and "representational interventions" (2012: 1) that seek to engage a broader public with the 'issues' of slum life, in an attempt to educate or bring about social change. Each position therefore implies quite different things about who the SFF was seeking to target with its films. If the event sought to 'correct the record' of negative representations of slums, surely it was not the negative impressions amongst people living within slums, but rather those of the wider community of viewers - within Nairobi, or perhaps internationally - amongst whom this negativity had been naturalised. On the other hand, the 'transformative expectations' of the SFF's educational strand underpins the interventional ambitions of the event in bringing about beneficial change amongst its slum-based spectators. Most fascinatingly, rather than shifting between these positions, the process of defining the screening schedule was marked by a particular *undecidability* between these approaches. There was a simultaneous promotion of educational films seemingly directed at slum communities, and a promotion of 'alternative' slum stories, directed toward a broader community of viewers. The event's activism is therefore articulated in relation to a need to redress broader international assumptions about 'slum life', was well as the didactic need to educate local slum-based communities.

This undecided quality in the activism of SFF is further complicated when we move beyond the officially accepted screening schedule and return to the fact that each festival facilitator replaced the scheduled films with their own film selections. At Hot Sun, this was exercised by increasing the number of films scheduled that came from the Kibera Film School, offering more of Hot Sun's own film students an opportunity to present and promote their work. As such the Kibera-based schedule shifted toward being almost exclusively focused on stories set in Kibera, reducing the spectrum of depictions of slums into a single neighbourhood. In an even more complicated alteration, Slum-TV's decision to exclude many of Hot Sun's productions saw them introduce a range of work from a group with whom they had a strong professional relationship: FilmAid International.[53] However, the majority of FilmAid International's film work is based in the north Kenyan refugee camps of Kakuma and Dadaab, as well as surrounding rural communities. As such, Slum-TV replaced films dealings with slums in Nairobi with representations of rural poverty and the struggles of life in refugee camps, significantly altering the correspondence between 'slums' and struggle, converging the screening of their Mathare event around more generalised and geographically dislocated engagements with ideas of human poverty. If the SFF's official screening schedule might already raise questions about how we can conceptualise the event's activist ambitions, the drifting apart of its centralised schedule further underlines how each SFF facilitating partner started to articulate the festival's own 'filmographic identity' in their own ways.

What sort of political activism is therefore galvanised by the SFF's slum filmography? On review, it would seem that the SFF 2012 was in many ways undecided about its own politically and socially transformative functions and ambitions. While Torchin and Iordanova on the one hand, and Dovey on the other, offer theorisations of the 'activist film festival' that draw on quite different understandings of the political relations between viewer and screen, all assume some degree of identifiability of the 'film festival', either through its thematic organisation of films (cf. Torchin and Iordanova 2012), or its demonstration of a politicised "*sensus communus"* (Dovey 2015: 176) amongst its participants. By turning instead to look

[53] FilmAid International provided Slum-TV with the screening equipment for SFF 2012's outdoor screening events in Mathare.

at the production of this activism, we might see the activist relation between viewers and their social transformation (and indeed the whole teleological mythology of the 'activist film festival' as an instigator of meaningful change), as itself a site of contestation within the discourse of the film festival as a situated social and political event. As such, while we might take Torchin's advice that "digging below the surface" (2012: 2) of activist film festivals is necessary, doing so can reveal the multiple nature of those 'activisms' that are manifold within single events, caught between the relations of different agents, and enunciated by the context of different organisational interests. Dominant representations of 'slums' as places of suffering and poverty return, even through the very process of actively seeking 'other' perspectives and stories. And this can be seen to happen not at the expense of effecting successful 'activism', but rather as part of the internal dimensions of how activism itself is organised and produced.

Filmmakers' Workshops: Between Activism and Self-promotion

> "We want to make films. We're just waiting for somebody to give us the money."
>
> Idah Nancy, *SFF Filmmaker's Workshop*, 7 August 2012[54]

In treating the SFF's 'slum filmography' as central feature of its discourse on film culture, activism, and social change, and by exploring the multiple ways that it was articulated in practice, we begin to establish some sense of the conflictual nature of the SFF project as a site of social engagement. Rather than strictly adhering to some clearly pre-defined mandate of social or political action, the correlation between the 'developmental' and the 'cultural' in the SFF 2012 – and accordingly the way that the event positions and articulates 'the slum' as its qualifying focus – appears to be an undecided and contested quality of the project. As the organisation of the event proceeded, with its screening schedule both officially agreed upon and internally contested, the event's early August 2012 start date loomed. Shuttling between meetings at Hot Sun and Slum-TV, and dealing with the flurries of email chains and phone calls that followed these meetings, the facilitators of the event scrambled to put in place the event's final details. Amongst these was the inclusion of a

[54] Idah Nancy, filmmaker at Slum-TV speaking up during the SFF 2012 'Film Training Workshops' in Mathare, Nairobi.

series of filmmakers' workshops to be run concurrently with the festival's screenings between 6 and 13 August 2012. These workshops represented another, and quite separate, aspect of the SFF's 'activist' ambition, bringing together media professionals from Nairobi to hold seminars on filmmaking for young filmmakers living in and working out of informal settlements. These events, on their surface at least, embodied a type of 'Africapitalist' (Elumelu 2014) spirit that promotes the neoliberal idea that self-promotion and personal investment, and empowerment and social mobility, are primarily the same thing. Here, the SFF's social function was once again repositioned, articulating 'film culture' in relation to notions of the professionalism of young and aspiring filmmakers, and to the place of new Kenyan talent within an industry of film production.

In Kibera the workshops were planned over three days and were going to focus on providing masterclasses in specialist filmmaking skills, although due to the majority of the workshop facilitators and speakers pulling out last minute, the event was eventually canceled (Keya, *personal communication*, 7 August 2012). In Mathare, these workshops took place on 7 and 8 August, at the Slum-TV offices in Eastlands. In consultation with Olivieri, Slum-TV had decided to focus the workshops on exposing its participants to insights from established filmmakers from different parts of Nairobi's film industry. Distinct from the technical film training classes that Slum-TV is funded by Africalia to run on a more regular basis, the Mathare SFF workshops were organised as seminar-style sessions during which guest speakers discussed their experiences as professional filmmakers. Four speakers were invited to present at the event. Opening the session was scriptwriter and filmmaker Cajetan Boy, who spoke about his experiences as a filmmaker and the role of scriptwriting in what he envisioned as the future of high quality Kenyan filmmaking. He was followed by cinematographer Bonny Katei, who presented on his work in film television and spoke at length about the importance of making movies for Kenyan audiences, that told Kenyan stories. Following Bonny Katei, Alessandra Argenti, from the Cultural Video Foundation, was invited to speak about participatory video production as a tool for political empowerment.[55] The session was then closed by Robby Bresson, a personal contact of

[55] Although I was aware of CVF's work, this was my first face-to-face meeting with Argenti, a connection which eventually precipitated my research involvement with CVF and *Wazi?FM*.

mine that I had recommended to Slum-TV while they were looking for a final event speaker from a different area of production in Nairobi. Bresson is a filmmaker and producer at X-Media with strong links to the Kikuyu vernacular film industry of downtown Nairobi (dubbed 'Riverwood'), and he presented on new strategies for being profitable as a Kenyan filmmaker. In particular, Bresson spoke about his venture *Simiyu Samurai* (2012-2015), a television show which has audiences pay via text-message to vote for the outcome of weekly plot twists. Participants of the workshops were largely students who had previously trained with Slum-TV, or were part of Slum-TV's network of local filmmakers based around Mathare.

The perspectives raised by speakers at the Mathare filmmakers' workshops can be distinguished in terms of three generally related themes. Speaking of their work as Kenyan filmmakers in film and television, Cajetan Boy and Bonny Katei both presented on the vital importance of 'authentic' Kenyan filmmaking. For Cajetan Boy, this was expressed in terms of the importance of good scriptwriting, and the pressing need to tell Kenyan stories in a context where most stories being told through Kenyan film were, Boy argued, foreign stories. Taking up a question from a participating student about funding opportunities, Boy defined his focus on scriptwriting with his answer: what is the point in having funding to make a film, if you don't have a good story to tell? Bonny Katei expanded upon a related line of thinking. Presenting on his experiences in Kenyan television production, Katei put forward the idea that Kenyan filmmakers should speak to Kenyan audiences. Focusing in particular on film festivals, Katei argued that filmmakers in Kenya should avoid trying to make films for 'international festival audiences', and instead focus on making films for Kenyans. He remarked on the lack of a strong Kenyan tradition of filmmaking, lamenting the tendency of filmmakers to retreat to Western models and Western stories.

With a very different set of interests, rooted primarily in participatory community-led film production, Alessandra Argenti presented on the testimonial power of film to give voice to local community issues. Here then, the impetus of film production was relocated into the language of development - of 'participation' and 'empowerment' - while there remained a

focus on telling *Kenyan* stories. The role of the filmmaker, however, had shifted significantly in Argenti's account, from the Kenyan artist or scriptwriter who explores Kenyan stories to the participatory filmmakers as a seemingly neutral conduit able to capture Kenyan reality through a participatory method. In a final, third thematic shift, Bresson's screening of his experimental TV-show *Simiyu Samurai* closed the day's discussions. *Simiyu Samurai* tells the story of a young Kenyan samurai warrior, returning home from Japan, who finds himself faced with a series of difficult choices. As Simiyu considers his options, the television show pauses, and several options pop up on screen. The viewer is then invited to text their desired outcome, for a fee, to the producers, and the following week's episode is decided by popular demand. This experimental concept responds to what Bresson highlights when he says that we are no longer dealing with TV-screens or cinema screens, but 'screens' much more generally: phone screens; computer screens. People walk around every day with a screen in their pocket, and Bresson poses a new, fresh challenge to filmmakers: how can they make this digital world work for them and bring about new ways of commercialising film in Kenya? Here then, the focus shifts once again, away from questions of authentic Kenyan voices and from participatory empowerment through film, toward an idea of financial success and economic stability.

With an audience of young aspiring filmmakers meeting full-time Nairobi-based media professionals, the discussion during the workshops quickly turned toward questions of money. Students responded excitedly to Bresson's talk, asking about the technical details of how much money he made when people texted in, and how much the production cost. Bresson answered honestly that the concept was struggling due to telecommunication provider Safaricom's hight transaction charges, but that he was in negotiation with them for a better, bespoke deal. Even with Argenti, whose presentation focused on the power of participatory film to change people's lives, participant questions turned quickly to the issue of writing funding proposals, and how to know which funds to apply for. During the talks by Cajetan Boy and Bonny Katei, this issue of finance confronted their ideas of cultural authenticity in somewhat more complex form. Bonny Katei in particular articulated the idea of the need to tell Kenyan stories in direct antithesis to international film festivals and NGOs

– both conceived of as sources of funding which forced filmmakers to make non-Kenyan stories. Cajetan Boy, who focused on the centrality of good scriptwriting, agued instead that what was needed was a Kenyan industry of filmmakers, commenting idealistically that if young Kenyans wanted to make films, they should simply go out and make them and not be burdened by the interests of funders. To this Idha Nancy, a member of the Slum-TV cooperative, responded irritably that "we want to make films. We're just waiting for somebody to give us the money" (*SFF Filmmaker's Workshop*, 7 August 2012). Cajetan Boy's response was incredulity, returning the question: "who is going to just give you money to do what you want?" (*SFF Filmmaker's Workshop*, 7 August 2012).

This exchange between Nancy, an aspiring filmmaker from Mathare who works on a subsistence basis with Slum-TV, and Cajetan Boy, an established and well known scriptwriter and director of Kenyan television, offers a revealing glimpse at the antagonisms amongst which the SFF operates. While Cajetan Boy might advocate the importance of supporting and encouraging Kenyan storytelling – by which he seems to mean stories about Kenyan life told for their own sake, rather than according to the interests of external parties – Nancy reminds us of the very real lack of funding that young filmmakers face. However funding, as both Boy and Katei imply, comes with strings attached. There emerges here a conflict, between the need on the one hand for Kenyan stories, and the question of what institutions would fund such stories. Boy's idealistic advice that if young filmmakers want to make films, they must simply go out and make them, sits at odds with Nancy's recognition that, as a filmmaker with no expendable income, limited access to equipment, and ambitions of earning an liveable income, simply going out and making film is not necessarily possible. Nancy's comment further directs our attention to the fact that, as a filmmaker trained and working within the context of NGO-related projects, she has a certain sense of entitlement to funding; she, along with many of the subsistence filmmakers that work at groups like Slum-TV and the Hot Sun Foundation, is waiting for money raised by trustees or boards of directors, so that they can then join in on projects upon which she would have little to no direct governing control. Nancy and Boy might be seen, in this way, to be working with very different meanings about what constitutes professional filmmaking.

To Boy, this professionalism is linked to a sense of narrative quality – of good scriptwriting that tells Kenyan stories. For Nancy, and for many of the slum-based filmmakers participating in the workshop, professionalism was instead configured in relation to funding and money. Less pressing is the issue of what kinds of films one makes, but rather the capacity to make a film in the first place.

This encounter neatly mirrors the antagonistic tensions that seem to be working through the particular identity crisis of SFF more generally. While the generation of an SFF slum filmography might have set out with the ambition of capturing alternative voices and new stories about slum life, they became inevitably trapped within qualifier of 'the slum' as a place of suffering and poverty. It is, after all, exactly this idea of slums as impoverished spaces that gives rise to the developmental notion of working with and 'empowering' slum communities. This is then complimented and contradicted with a seemingly linked programme – initially put forth during the initial foundation of the SFF by media NGO professionals Murcy Muragi and Kenneth Wendo – of supporting and promoting slum-based filmmakers. In a similar sense, the SFF 2012 filmmakers' workshops were marked by the collision of the desire to tell Kenyan stories, to support local Kenyan talent, to embrace the empowering potential of film, and the fact that filmmakers need funding. The alienation of Idha Nancy from Cajetan Boy's notion of 'authenticity' seems paralleled in this sense by the SFF's alienation from its own concept of 'alternative stories' about the slum. This tension might be thought of as a presiding contradiction within the 'activism' of the SFF, in which the 'slum' is treated as a location – and community – in need of developmental intervention, while simultaneously positioning young and eager filmmakers as aspiring professionals in need of funding and promotion. The SFF, in this sense, seems undecided about whether it seeks a community-based cultural intervention through film, or whether is promotes the professionalism of young Kenyan filmmakers. In doing both at once, the SFF positions itself at the juncture of an antagonism in three senses: a discourse on film culture of what constitutes an important story; a developmental discourse which articulates value judgments about important social issues in slums; and an economic discourse that articulates ideas of aspirational professionalism and of slum-based

filmmakers finding sources of income with which to make films, and make a living. Rather than any resolution or reconciliation between these antagonistic positions, the filmmakers workshop demonstrates instead some elements of the persistence of this tension, and the complex coordination of what 'cultural activism' means in a slum.

As the workshops in Mathare came to a close, a resolution was passed between its facilitators and participants. Despite disagreements over what questions should be preoccupying young filmmakers, everybody agreed that they would like to be making more films. Cajetan Boy proposed that, as part of the Slum Film Festival's yearly events, participants could work with professionals like himself to actually produce a short film to be screened at each subsequent festival. The idea was met with agreement across the group, and while this ambitious proposal did not materialised within the mandate of the SFF, it closed the filmmakers workshop with a sense of excitement and optimism. Despite the disagreements and divergences on the social, political and economic role of film and filmmaking, Boy's proposal served as an important reminder that, if by nothing else, the participants of the SFF workshops were at least unified by a genuine excitement for producing film.

Projection in Practice: perspectives from Mabatini and Kamukunji

Once participants had cleared the Slum-TV office after the afternoon workshop session, the Slum-TV group gathered together to set up the first of the SFF 2012's Mathare events. We waited for Collins Omondi to arrive with a small truck, rented from one of Omondi's neighbours, to carry people and equipment to Mabatini, the communal grounds a few minutes drive into Mathare that was hosting the event. As we waited Idha Nancy, Beatrice Kiamba, Vincent Omuga and myself briefly ran through minor details, checking that Nancy had copies of films to be screened, while Omuga confirmed with FilmAid International that they were on their way with the inflatable screen and power generator. When the truck finally turned up, we piled in and made our way through the clogged Nairobi afternoon traffic. On arriving at Mabatini, we hauled banners and equipment beneath washing lines

Fig. 5.2 – The screen is laid out before inflation at Mabatini, Mathare. 6 August 2012. Credit: Joshua McNamara.

Fig. 5.3 – A crowd begins to gather as night falls in Mabatini, Mathare. 6 August 2012. Credit: Joshua McNamara.

Fig. 5.4 – A gazebo is set up at Kamukunji grounds in Kibera to protect equipment from sudden August rains. 7 August 2013. Credit: Joshua McNamara.

Fig. 5.5 – With the screen set up, the crowd is entertained by live performances until the sun sets and the screenings begin. 8 August 2012.

and over a shallow stagnant drainage channel, placing them along the spray painted corrugated iron wall that runs along one edge of Mabatini's amphitheatre, enclosing the dusted bowl within which children and young teenagers play football, chase each other with sticks, and climb up the rocky face of the amphitheatre wall.

What struck me on arriving at Mabatini was how far the SFF was from the glamorous film festivals as the glistening hubs of international cultural exchange found in the works of de Valck (2007) or Wong (2011). Even in her reflection on the remote FiSahara festival, Lindiwe Dovey notes the excitement the event generated amongst Dakhla's population (2015: 171). Arriving at Mabatini, it became quickly evident that the SFF's beneficiary community had no idea what the event was. Taking place on communal grounds regularly frequented by NGOs and their projects, what else might we have seemed, a group of people from a local media NGO with boxes of equipment and branded banners and t-shirts and the occasional inclusion of a foreign face, other than yet another development project blending into the ambient discursive noise of NGOs working in the slums?
Across town, in Kibera, the same general process of setting up the first event for SFF 2012 was underway, although as Kibera's Kamukunji grounds are only a short walk from the Hot Sun Foundation offices, Hot Sun screenings are particularly familiar in the area.[56] A permanent metal stage sits at one end of Kamukunji, a platform for theatre performances and film screenings. Running along the edge of the screening area, Kibera's iconic train line separates Kamukunji from the narrow dirt streets and sprawling expanse of clay and metal buildings of the settlement's northern neighbourhood. Compared to Mabatini's grand amphitheatre, Kamukunji seems small and cramped; a busy pedestrian thoroughfare around the fringes of which merchants sell homeware, clothes and fruit, laid out on blue waterproof tarps in the dust. People generally ignore us as we carry canvas and poles for the small gazebo that we later erect to shelter the projector from sudden August rains.

[56] As the festival events in both locations ran simultaneously, I needed to shift between Kibera and Mathare on different evenings. As such, I had to rely on conversations with various organisers to report on the events that I missed. While multi-sited ethnography might have been theorised as a reality of contemporary research (cf. Falzon ed. 2009), simultaneity still poses a fundamental research challenge. While I had initially considered only staying at a single location, to at least get a fuller picture of a single event, I eventually decided that some experience with both events was necessary in establishing a proper sense of how the SFF project was run.

As the SFF festival events in Mathare and Kibera started to get underway, there was a notable emphasis on the entertainment that preceded the film screenings themselves. This was done, as Slum-TV festival facilitator Omondi explained, in order to draw the crowds. It was also, as gradually emerged, a useful way to distract gathering spectators during protracted technical challenges of setting up the screening equipment. In Mathare, an MC stands within the natural stone amphitheatre of Mabatini, part of the physical geography of Mathare valley. He is flanked by two large speakers with a microphone in hand, performing a call-and-answer song to a pressing crowd of young children who were displaced from their site of play by the festival, and now gather at the sign of renewed entertainment. Eventually the MC welcomes dancers and singers to join him 'on stage', although in Mathare what serves as a stage is a clearing before the screen. The MC holds a dancing competition for local children, and the winners – those who attract the loudest applause – are given DVD copies of Slum-TV's films. As the momentum of the event builds, a crowd of young men gathers along the Mabatini escarpment that overlooks the open field of the amphitheatre, while groups of young children and their parents or minders clutter the open space closer to the performers. The children, inching forward at every opportunity, are kept in place by roaming security guards – young men hired from the local area. As Collins Omondi explains, the security guards are hired from amongst young gangs from the area of the screening most likely to cause trouble, thus avoiding "two issues at once" (Omondi, *SFF management meeting*, 2 August 2012). Yet soon even the security guards stop trying to hold the group of children back and the kids spill over the screening area while the Slum-TV and FilmAid crews struggle in the background to hoist a twenty foot tall inflatable screen.

At Kibera's Kamukunji grounds, the event seems more rigidly managed. The first thing that members of the Hot Sun crew do when they arrive at the location is pull together a small gazebo, sectioned off by string which separates the public from the area directly in front of the screen where the projectionist works. Security guards, also young men local to the area, patrol the line of string and keep back the children who press in excitedly on the screening area. An MC then draws the crowds together, playing music and inviting children

from the audience to come on stage and compete in singing and joke telling competitions for small cash prizes. This entertainment, which started daily at around 2pm, often ran longer than the screenings themselves. As with Mathare, the entertainment at Kibera served to draw in a crowd of spectators, and by sunset hundreds of people encircled the two large inflatable screens in Kibera and Mathare. While the crowd was attracted by the singing and dancing performers, the crowd would then transform, according to the SFF's overall plan, into the spectating public of the planned schedule of film screenings. It is interesting, then, that the success of the SFF's opening entertainment at gathering a crowd was paralleled with the near total collapse of the SFF's established screening schedule at both locations.

During the first screening event in Mathare on 6 August 2012, the MC played for hours while a hole in the inflatable screen behind him was located and patched, before being re-inflated for the third time. The event, which had officially started at several hours earlier, suffered several interruptions. As FilmAid International's branded van crept through commuters along the Mabatini escarpment, the children playing in the open grounds ran up to it, chanting "Cinema! Cinema!". However this initial excitement dissipated as it turned out that FilmAid had left the ropes required to hoist the screen at their offices, and needed to return across town through heavy Nairobi traffic. It took several hours for them to make the return trip, at which point it was already getting dark. By the time we finally managed to get the screen erect, the Mabatini location is lit by nothing but the orange glow of high security lights. This delay lead to a general stress amongst the festival staff, and a feeling that the audience was now getting bored of waiting. Kenneth Wendo, wanting to make a good first impression with the event suggested that Idha Nancy start the screenings. Without a printed screening schedule, Nancy simply grabbed a few of the DVDs lying nearby and, quickly discussing with Slum-TV and FilmAid staff around her, elected to put one on. The absence of a printed version of the schedule, and a lack of communication about who was responsible for the DVDs, meant that rather than the scheduled films, three random films were shown instead.

Of these screened films, only one was from the official screenings list. This film, *Never Again* (2011), features burning flags, loud wailing music, and shots of the aftermath of the Kenyan election violence in 2008. The film was poorly received, and a scattering of moans echoed around Mabatini, as children leapt back up to run and play and find entertainment elsewhere. Nancy let the film run for a few minutes, with myself and several other members of Slum-TV gathered around the projector. The audience was beginning to visibly thin out. In panic, Nancy stopped playing the current DVD – it had rolled on to the next feature from FilmAid International's catalogue, and was projecting establishing shots over a flat dry desert – and grabbing a new DVD from the pile, put on an animation instead.

	Mathare	**Kibera**
Monday	Never Again Nipe Nafasi Unknown Animation	Ndoto za Elibidi
Tuesday	No screening. (FilmAid failed to show up.)	Miss Nobody Zebu and the Photo Fish
Wednesday	No screening. (Rain).	No screening. (Rain).
Thursday	Soul Boy (At Kwa Austin)	Soul Boy
Friday	No Screening. (Rain)	Soul Boy
Saturday	Ndoto za Elibidi (at A2 grounds). Various Music videos.	Miss Nobody, Zebu and the Photo Fish, The In-Laws.

List of screenings, by location. Slum Film Festival, 6 - 11 August 2012

In Kibera, similar divergences from the schedule took place, driven by a similar, although less chaotic, sense of popular demand. For example, no FilmAid International films were screened at Kamukunji, while *Soul Boy* (2010) – a short German-British funded film widely successful both nationally and on the international festival circuit – was screened repeatedly, due to the fact that it "attracted the people" (Okello, *personal conversation,* 10 August 2012). Instead of the FilmAid International films came the promotion of work from the Kibera Film School – perhaps understandably, as the filmmakers were themselves involved in organising screenings – including *The In-Laws* and *Miss Nobody*.

As Hot Sun had control of its own screening equipment, screenings were more regular. On the Tuesday screening in Mathare however, due to several hours stuck in traffic, FilmAid International failed to arrive with the screen at all. On the Wednesday, heavy August rains

canceled the event, and while the water eventually drained away from Kamukunji, Mabatini's amphitheatre was flooded and became inaccessible. Slum-TV elected to shift location to a communal ground called Kwa Austin, which sits just off the main road between Mathare and Nairobi's industrial sector. The screening at Kwa Austin, only a few hundred metres toward the outskirts of Mathare, dramatically altered the kinds of spectators that the SFF's entertainment attracted. Rather than children and commuters, Kwa Austin's proximity to matatu bus stops and local pubs drew in a larger crowd of predominantly rowdy young men who, as the evening progressed, became increasingly drunk. On the final day of screenings, the Slum-TV group decided to move the SFF location once again, this time away from a main road and down towards a busy market area called A2 grounds, an open field that foregrounded the large skeletal frame of a residential construction site. While the official schedule suggested that this final closing Saturday of screenings be used to screen the awarded 'Best of' films agreed upon by the SFF's judges,[57] in Mathare Slum-TV initiated instead a very successful screening of *Ndoto za Elibidi* (2010) that drew a large crowd of several hundred. The film was selected because when they screened it at the preceding year's event, it had proved very popular.

Proximity, Difference, and the Somatic Solidarity of Spectatorship

This spectator influence over the meaning of the SFF's screenings repeated itself in various ways throughout the event. I found it both revealing, and problematic, to sit with audiences, situated as part of its crowd. As a spectator I was very distinct from those around me: I was a foreigner, and this was not my community; I had already watched many of the films that were being screened; I held a complex understanding of what the SFF was trying to accomplish, and erred toward anticipating its effect and measuring its impact; I was 'part of the SFF team', emotionally entangled with people who had worked hard to get this event together, and was anxious for its success. However it was exactly this *difference* to the spectating crowd that proved most revealing. I sat amongst festival spectators, in a position of conflict between a sense of both belonging and isolation amongst people watching,

[57] This film award judgment was done internally by Hot Sun, a fact which caused further tension with Slum-TV, who quickly remarked on the number of Kibera Film School films that were being awarded.

ignoring, and generally interacting with the films. This provided a visceral, and not particularly intellectual, opportunity to sense the signs of boredom, the thinning of the crowd, or the excitement and rapt attention.

While it would be intellectually vacuous to move from this experience toward synecdochic exaggerations about what the 'audience thought', this vantage point provided some sense of the emotions which the projectionists were interpreting in order to make their projection decisions. During the screening of *Ndoto za Elibidi* (2010) at A2 grounds in Mathare, the crowd quickly thickened, laughing hysterically at the film's numerous pantomimic gags, or sitting in general silence during its more somber moments. It was a stark contrast with how quickly people abandoned the screenings during music videos or documentaries. FilmAid International's *Nipe Nafasi* (2012), a social documentary about Kenyans displaced by election violence in 2008, had its seriousness undercut by the hysterical laughter of children in the audience during one particular scene in which, standing at the back of a queue children standing in line for porridge at a refugee camp, a young boy can be seen holding a massive bucket instead of a small cup. Seemingly unaware of the comedic implication of the shot, the director had placed the scene several times throughout the film, and the ensuing laughter drowned out the serious dialogues of the documentary's participants. On another occasion, an animation whose origin was unknown even to the projectionist who screened it in Mathare by accident, drew a lot of attention, especially from the younger children in the audience. Although the animation told a tragic story of a mother watching her child get murdered by an angry mob while cleaning near a river, there were moans of disappointment from the children when the sort film ended.

Sitting with the audience, however ineffective as a substantial study of the social and cultural worlds of the individual spectators, provided at the very least an opportunity to feel the moans of disappointment or laughter, and get some sense of a somatic solidarity evidenced at the screening locations. It was an interpretation of these sighs, groans, laughs and physical departures upon which the projectionist based their knowledge of which films were most likely to receive public approval, and which to avoid. The chaotic second-life of

the Slum Film Festival was, in the abandonment of its planned programme, re-invented based on a feeling for audience reactions by festival organisers on the ground. Where Kenneth Turan writes of the horror a filmmaker experiences at Cannes International Film Festival at the 'thumping' sound the seats make as viewers leave the auditorium in the middle of a screening (2002: 25), it would be unthinkable that a projectionist at Cannes might take this abandonment as a cue to change the film. In this respect the spectators at Mabatini and Kamukunji might be seen to have usurped the festival programme, to have regained some form of power and control over this supposedly 'public event', if not directly then at least in their refusal to attend to 'slum stories' as prescribed by SFF's overall mandate.

While the definition of the SFF's 'slum filmography' and the content of Mathare's filmmakers' workshops had already hinted at the complexity of the SFF's identification as an 'activist' event, there was nevertheless a recurrent sense of ethical value behind the SFF's mandate - of either promoting educational film, or advancing alternative narratives of slum life. What the screenings in Mathare and Kibera announced, however, was a radical departure from this vision, encapsulated in the crowds' refusal to sit down and behave as the appropriate 'subjects' of the SFF. The chaos and contingency of the spectating crowd, we might argue, in fact invert this assumed relationship: the Slum Film Festival itself started to become the 'subject' of the crowd's pleasure and enjoyment.

The Closing Ceremony: The Celebration of a Success

In a final public event, the SFF team organised a Closing Awards Ceremony at downtown Nairobi's prestigious Alliance Française. Up large stairs and between the stone pillars of its façade, beyond two security guards and a quick sweep with a metal detector, the cinema auditorium of the Alliance Française was a stark contrast to the public spaces of Mabatini and Kamukunji. The SFF 2012 had shown itself to be a manifold event composed of vying interests and imaginaries, full of multiple activist ambitions and antagonistic expressions of the empowering dynamics of film culture. The articulations of the event's filmographic

identity marked the initial contours of some of these conflicts, an undecided discourse in which the 'slum' is articulated as both the thematic subject of a developmental intervention, and the locational context within which both a political and professional form of activism was to be effectuated. The screening events in Mathare and Kibera further subverted any clear definition of the SFF's political or cultural intentions, forcing a realignment of our thinking about what, in practice, the SFF articulates within its two beneficiary communities.

In being a 'human rights film festival' in the sense Torchin and Iordanova introduce (2012), pursuing the goal of establishing a programme of politically and culturally empowering film, and then disseminating this programme of film within informal settlements such as to effectuate meaningful change or 'testimonial encounter', the SFF 2012 might be considered a 'failure'. Even in relation to Dovey's more situated and nuanced theorisation of common political experience at an activist film festival (2015: 167-176), the SFF's discursive corollaries of film as entertainment, as professional opportunity, as an expression of authenticity, as the promotion of 'slum stories', and of the providers of moral and educational development, interrupt any clear or defined sense of political or activist 'commonality'. Similarly, the SFF's goal of promoting 'slum-based filmmakers', while not necessarily a failure, certainly failed to correspond with the festival's parallel ambition of breaking with dominant negative representations of informal settlements.

It should be reiterated here that these 'failings' cannot be entirely attributed to the plans and intentions of the SFF facilitators. They were also strongly influenced by certain important material constraints. For example, there is a notably shallow pool of films for selection that deal with 'slums', the vast majority of which are NGO-funded educational films about the hardships of slum life. As Nancy inadvertently reminds us, whom other than NGOs are going to fund inexperienced filmmakers from slums? Furthermore, much of the disruption of the film screenings arose from the physical challenges of putting on an event in locations with little or no infrastructure for film screening. Flooding and August rains, unpredictable traffic holding up the delivery of vital equipment, and a transitory crowd in need of entertainment all exercised a strong effect over what the SFF screenings were able to

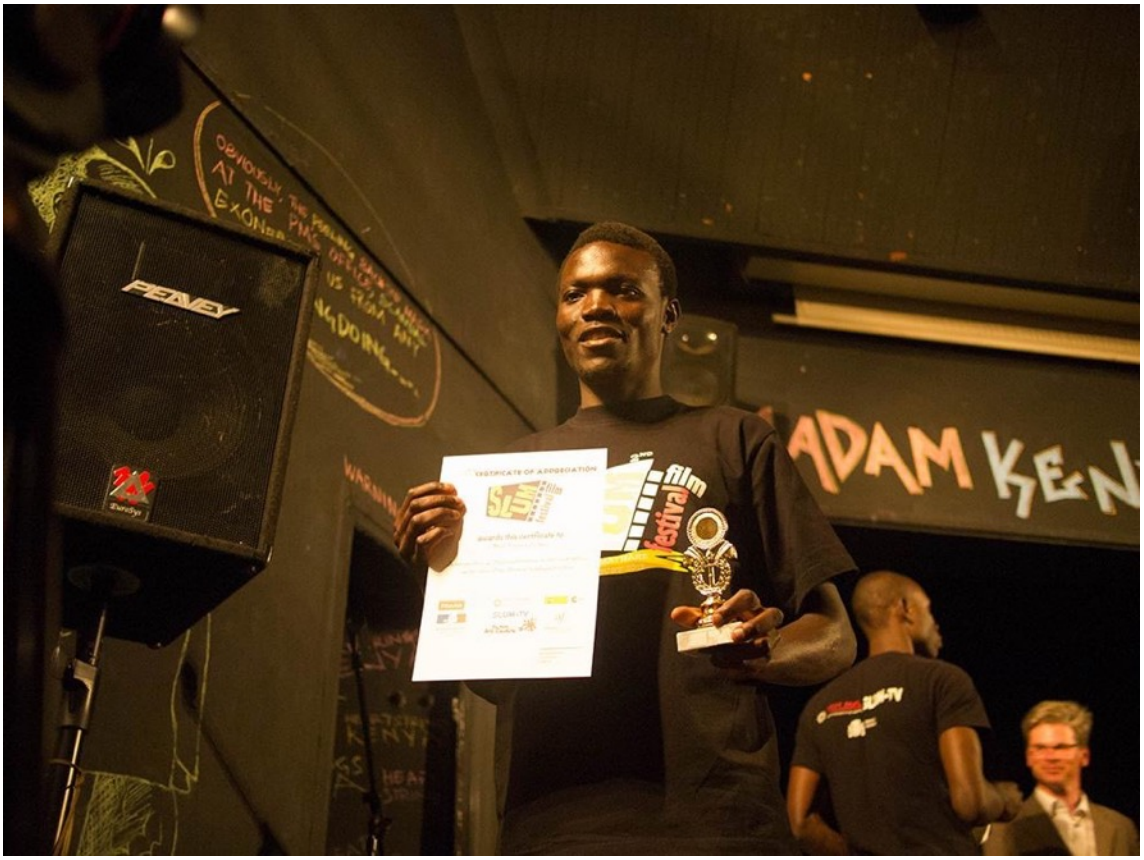

Fig. 5.6 – Filmmaker holds up his award in the Best Drama category for *In-Laws* (2011). 13 August 2012. Credit: Joshua McNamara.

Fig. 5.7 – Closing Awards Ceremony in the cinema auditorium of the Alliance Française. 13 August 2012. Credit: Joshua McNamara.

accomplish. Nevertheless, especially when held up against analyses of other 'activist', 'human rights' or 'social concern' film festivals, the SFF 2012 seems to have largely failed to achieve its various publicised mandates.

However during the Closing Awards Ceremony, hosted by a French cultural institute and attended by representative from the Belgium and Spanish embassies, as well as by heads of various associated organisations, the resounding success of the SFF's programme and mission was defended in earnest. Standing on stage before the screenings of SFF's awarded films, Josphat Keya from the Hot Sun spoke about the numerous films that had been submitted and the enthusiasm with which they were received by audiences in Kibera and Mathare. What followed was an account from several representatives of facilitating partners and funders, speaking to an audience of other facilitating partners and donors - as well as a scattering of confused bystanders who had turned up for the Alliance Française's weekly Monday free film screening - about the broad cultural and social benefits of the SFF. These accounts culminated in the Spanish embassy's new Cultural Attaché commenting aspirationally that: "the SFF [is] a festival dubbed since last year, 'From the slums, by the slums, and for the slum dwellers', but which today is actually becoming 'from the slums, by the slums', but indeed to the entire Kenyan community" (Douglas Macharia, *Closing Ceremony Speech*, 13 August 2012).

The success of film festivals has been a fairly consistent feature of much scholarship in an emerging academic field of study which has in a sense been caught off-guard by the meteoric upsurge in events across the world. For de Valck (2007), it was the 'success' of film festivals which stabilised them into a professional film-industry 'network'. In his earlier work, Kenneth Turan studies Mexico's Sarasota French Film Festival with romantic facination as "the festival that failed" (2002: 159). Within the particular coordinate system of global festival studies, success is taken for granted as a precondition for existing and running. However, as we reposition our approach to align with concerns associated to the study of 'activist festivals', the question of success and failure changes considerably. In festivals seeking to promote particular idealisations, or provide particular social or cultural

services, success is measured as the ability to do so. However, as suggested so far, within the SFF goals, intentions, and influences are multiple and interrelate in complex ways. To judge the success of the event would require us to first unequivocally answer what it was in fact attempting to achieve. In order to think through the implications of this, we therefore need to abandon the clarity of the definition of what a festival - even an 'activist' festival - is.

Anthropologist James Ferguson, an early proponent of a post-development critique, offers some useful insight for advancing a critique of 'success' in the context of projects whose target is some form of local development. In his work on the 'anti-politics machine' of economic development in Lesotho (1990) Ferguson argues that to dismiss development projects simply because they have been deemed failures would be to ignore all the complex political implications and 'unintended consequences' of a project's broader societal impact. In inviting questions that steps outside of what is said about a project, and move our thinking instead toward what projects do and ho they do it, Ferguson opens development to an entirely different sort of criticism. The label 'failure' becomes a question of perspective, and of vested political priorities. In a similar sense, the celebratory statements of success at the closing awards ceremony mark an alignment with one particular version of what the SFF was, and a divergence from what the festival is in fact doing. This departure can be traced throughout the SFF 2012 closing ceremony event. Apart from the festival organisers themselves, almost nobody in attendance at the closing ceremony had attended the screenings in Mathare and Kibera, and nobody from the slums had made the journey to the closing ceremony. Of the films awarded prizes at the ceremony, *Miss Nobody*, *The In-Laws*, and *Zebu and the Photo Fish* had not been screened in Mathare at all. Statements of the SFF's broadening reach of influence was counter balanced by the collapse in communications and the mutual isolation of events and teams at Mathare and Kibera. In this moment of celebratory promotional frontage the SFF took on a new character, in which the difficulties and struggles of the SFF - the totality of its complex interactions, from which emerged an imperfect and changeable event - had no place.

It seems that, at one level at least, to the donors and facilitating partners the successes of the event itself were irrelevant. In a marked difference to Ferguson's study - which is interested in programmes for economic development at the regional and national levels - the 'success' of the SFF in the eyes of its donors is measured not in terms of the practical, everyday impact and effect of its screenings. As a project for 'cultural', rather than economic development, the event's mere existence is sufficient pre-condition for its success. For a project focused on promoting slum-based filmmakers and screening films in informal settlements, being able to demonstrate that 'we did it' is seemingly good enough. Understanding what it is that was done, and what that doing in turn does, turns out to be entirely besides the point.

Approaching a Festival

I was left with a certain unease at the end of my engagement with the SFF 2012. Exactly what kind of *thing* was this event? Thinking about the SFF as a 'film festival' proves initially revealing, yet eventually problematic. While certainly having little in common with international film festivals like Cannes, new literature on political activist and social concern film festivals raise insightful questions about the complex relations that operate amongst spectators, films, and the incitement of political feeling. However unlike Torchin and Iordanova's work on human rights festivals (2012), the SFF was primarily located within the community of its 'social concern'. In this sense it shares more in common with Dovey's account of FiSahara, an event that takes place within the refugee camp of the displaced people whom it champions. The SFF was located within 'slums', bringing film into communities that have a diminished access to cinema, and attempting to fertilise a 'film culture' such as to encourage future generations of slum-based filmmakers to tell stories about their lives and neighbourhoods.

Yet, in a marked difference from FiSahara, almost nobody in Kibera or Mathare – other than those directly involved with the event – would have had any idea what the Slum Film Festival was, or what it hoped to represent. While we can argue that this fact might change

over time, as the event becomes more established and better known, there remains an overriding irony to the SFF's self-identification. While it announces 'the slum' as its activist focus, in the way that FiSahara announces refugees from the Western Sahara, for people living within Kibera and Mathare 'the slum' is not *necessary* a point of clear political or social contention. The assumption that 'the slum' represents 'an issue' bears the mark of a privileged external observation that pre-articulates the slum as a place of absence or need. Yet as Kenneth Wendo so elegantly puts it, amongst all this talk about what a slum is, to the vast majority of people living in Kibera and Mathare, it is simply 'mbani' – *home*.

The ironic undercurrent of the SFF project can be recognised in the fact that, while it sought to promote slum-based filmmakers in telling their *own* stories, it did so from within a discursive framework in which the 'the slum' was identified *precisely* as a location of particular *types* of story. The interplay of meanings within this irony can be seen to run throughout the project, demonstrated most notably in the particular undecidability over the project's social and political identity. While this irony might have given rise to a crisis within the SFF regarding the project's 'developmental success', in a more optimistic sense it can also be seen as the basis upon which the SFF was filled with an unexpected and unplanned social and political energy. Where developmental plans and ambitions raise static questions of 'success' and 'failure', irony, undecidability and antagonism turn our attention instead toward the contingent social and cultural *life* of the *live* event.
More than a 'film festival' in any analytically distinct sense, it therefore seems more productive to think of the SFF as moments of imbrication and interaction between contesting ideas about 'culture' and 'development'. In this way, we might move beyond film festival studies' fixation with ideas of a festival's 'success', whether economic or political. Instead our attention is turned toward building more situated accounts of how these events take place, and those practices through which they are constituted as 'events' in the first place.

Chapter 6

Development and Professional Style: Rethinking Social Action in the SFF 2013

I sat with my back to the pale blue steel door of the Slum-TV office, which occupies the corner units of a block of apartments down an unpaved path off Juja Road, waiting for Vincent Omuga in the shade of an overhanging balcony. It was an early afternoon in late February 2013, and Nairobi was sweltering. Juja Road, which separates the neighbourhoods of Mathare and Eastleigh, is a busy thoroughfare from the industrial district to downtown Nairobi and Westlands. Down at the far end of the street matatu buses stream past on various routes in and out of the city, but through the heat from where I'm sitting, inset from the bustle on the Eastleigh side of Juja Road, the music and calls of ticket touts were a distant murmur. Omuga, the new manager of Slum-TV, is held up in traffic across town, so I wait, squatting in the shade against the wall. Eventually people started to take notice of me, catching my eye as they walk deeper into Eastleigh or out toward the town. At one point a small group of young men from a makeshift garage across the street start whistling, laughing as they tried to catch my attention. I eventually give them an awkward thumbs-up, before affecting a look of relaxed distraction. Later a chokora – a homeless teenager – with a small sack of garbage slung over his shoulder and a pale yellow bottle of huffing glue nudges my shoulder and asks, I assume, for money, although I can't make out the words. When I turn him down he sits nearby for a while, before eventually wandering away. Waiting for Omuga, I realise that I'm on edge. I'm watching out for people approaching me. I start avoiding the gaze of anybody trying to catch my attention. I had been into Eastleigh many times, working from these offices in 2012, driving home alone at night from screenings deep within Mathare, but this was the first time I had ever had a

strong awareness of being out of place. It was the first occasion during my time working with the Slum Film Festival that I had experienced a feeling of visceral insecurity.

I've wondered about that feeling often since. There was nothing particularly hostile in the actions of anybody toward me. I'm sure that people were at most mildly interested, perhaps slightly amused, to see an unknown foreigner sitting casually on a road side in their neighbourhood, if they bothered noticing me at all. I realise how strange I must have seemed, a mzungu – generally associated to one of Nairobi's affluent classes, and certainly no local to Eastleigh – sitting against a wall for an hour and a half in the heat, waiting. Looking back, I realised that while I had spent lots of time in Eastleigh and Mathare, this was the first occasion in which I had been there alone, without the official surroundings and support of Slum-TV. It was an insecurity, then, in the double-meaning of the word, as a perceived lack of safety, but one given rise to in part by my own lack of self-confidence; a feeling that I did not belong, and had no reason – or even right – to sit where I sat. Omuga finally arrived, unlocking the Slum-TV office, and we slipped inside and settled down to catching up and discussing the 2013 edition of the SFF. Indoors, within a 'professional' space and with a sense of getting back to work, the feeling quickly passed. However its impression stayed with me: a conflictual impression of strangeness and familiarity; of both my difference to and proximity with Eastleigh and Mathare, captured in the strange style of my professional 'practice-based' engagement with the Slum Film Festival.

Throughout the following chapter, I would like to take up this idea of the 'professional' subjectivities of the SFF as a way of exploring its September 2013 edition. I propose that the complex intersections of the SFF with its beneficiary filmmakers and communities can be interestingly explored through an idea of 'the professional', the analysis of which might deepen our appreciation of the particular complexity of the SFF as a unique moment in the culturalisation of development in urban Nairobi. I had already encountered a simple form of the idea of professionalism in the SFF 2012, as one of the corollaries of the event's undecided identity, exemplified in the filmmakers workshop and indicative of the underlying tension between 'professionals', 'self-promotion' and 'the slums' that ran through the SFF's

activities. Expanding from this initial encounter, I turn here to question some of different kinds of 'professional' worlds and imaginaries that are articulated through the practices of the event's organisation. This idea of the 'professional' is therefore taken to mean something more than the definite signification of expertise in a skill that one is paid for. It describes instead the entanglement of individual aspirations to be professional – to be of celebrated quality, to demonstrate skill, and to be able to make a living for this skill – and to belong to a perceived order of other professionals who have succeeded in this task. In exploring this idea, and building on an introductory approach offered by African film scholar Carmela Garritano (2013), I present a theorisation of 'professionalism' as what James Ferguson has called an 'urban style' (1999: 93-99). As I will try to show, an articulatory and imaginative conception of 'professional style' provides a useful extension to an analysis of the culturalisation of development. As such, this chapter will speak directly to the social and economic tensions at work when 'becoming developed' is equated to 'becoming a professional'. In this way, I will elaborate a critique of the strange and ironic notion underlying the SFF: that you might 'work your way out of poverty' by becoming a filmmaker that makes films about poverty.

In presenting the SFF 2013 through an exploration of professional style, I will advance a narrative of the festival broken down into three moments. In the first, I turn to consider the process through which the perceived failures of the preceding SFF 2012 were reviewed, leading to the subsequent 'formalisation' of the SFF 2013. As I will show, this process of 'formalisation' drew out a conflict between Federico Olivieri's ambitions of establishing a global SFF 'brand', and professional tensions between facilitating partners for the promotion of their own organisations within their own particular neighbourhoods. Olivieri's hope was to eventually establish an SFF 'brand' that could be gradually applied to events at different slum locations across the world. This notion was no doubt strongly influenced by the type of 'professional' film festival that Olivieri experienced while working with Festival de Cine Africano de Córdoba (FCAT), an event that had similarly attempted to 'export' itself to different parts of the world (Dovey 2015: 152). In clear distinction, participants from Hot Sun and Slum-TV barely wanted to work between Mathare and Kibera, let alone on any global

scale, and articulated their professionalism in terms of their own work and standing as media professionals within their particular local communities.

The second moment, continuing from these thoughts, turns to consider those 'networks' through which the SFF's fundraising and film solicitation operated, exploring what were often highly privileged 'professional networks' from which the majority of the SFF organisers – as slum-based media practitioners – were for the most part disarticulated. What this argument hopes to draw out is an understanding of how, in seeking to promote and support young slum-based professional filmmakers, the SFF presents us with an assumption that to be a 'developed' and to be 'professional' are thought of as more or less the same thing. And yet, within the SFF itself, these slum-filmmaker professionals are precisely *disarticulated* from networks of funding, and are afforded no economic stability nor credibility within the developmental infrastructure within which they are promoted. In the final analysis, it is precisely those professional subjects who are supposedly 'already developed' – in the present case, Federico Olivieri and myself – that are afforded privileged access to economic stability. This analysis then adds significant depth to the 'irony' that was observed as central to the SFF in 2012. It does so by recognising that the professional styles of slum-based filmmakers is marked by an aspirationalism that these filmmakers are then denied the infrastructural support to actually achieve.

Finally, in bringing this chapter to a close, I advance a more explorative theory of social action that draws together reflections from across both years of the event. In trying to understand the constitutive struggles of the SFF as a 'planned event', I propose a radical theorisation of social action through a theory of parody and 'parodic performance', in which the impossibility of matching the SFF's 'live event' with its plans and ambitions is seen not on a scale of relative success or failure, but rather as a performative conflict between parody and professionalism. Before attempting to draw out this account further, I will first provide a brief theorisation of 'professional style'.

Toward a Practice-based Theory of Professional Style

> All men (sic.) are intellectuals, one could therefore say: but not all men (sic.) have in society the function of intellectuals.
>
> – Antonio Gramsci, *The Intellectual* (1989): 115

What do we mean by 'professional'? The term itself has a contentious place in the history of the critique of development, in which 'professionalisation' has been seen as part of the ordering and disciplinary logic that underpins economic policies for neoliberalisation (Kothari 2005), and has been theorised as a mechanism for the maintenance of the hegemonic relation between an affluent North and impoverished South (cf. Townsend, Porter and Mawdsley 2004; Nightingale 2005; Nightingale and Ojha 2013). Human geographer Katharine McKinnon, in her hopeful yet critically provocative essay "Postdevelopment, Professionalism, and the Politics of Participation" (2007), moves this treatment of professionalism forward considerably, pointing out that professional development practice is itself a site of political contestation. McKinnon focuses on "professionals as subjects in themselves for ethnographic enquiry" (2007: 774), foregrounding the "haphazard relationship between policy and practice" (2007: 774). McKinnon signifies in 'the professional' a "broad range of individuals involved in development processes", including "individual researchers and consultants … government officials … NGO workers and activists" and community representatives (2007: 775). In this way McKinnon uses a definition of the professional as an initial circumspection amongst a broader group of ethnographic subjects, and a way of further defining her field of study.

While a useful starting point, I would like to advance the concept of the professional in a markedly different direction. As the preceding analysis of the SFF 2012 illustrates, what is at stake in this current study is not simply those things that particular subjects, defined as professionals, *do* or *practice*. Our interest here lies in the contested articulations of 'being professional', bounded by particular discursive parameters, and seen in the ways that the SFF was formalised into a legitimate cultural project and in the professional aspirations of its participants. As Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci puts it, writing about the social constitution of 'intellectuals' while sitting in prison for his own political and intellectual work

as the head of Italy's communist part under Mussolini, societies are organised such as to give certain types of people the position of 'intellectuals', seen as authoritative professionals that work to maintain the social institutions that support them: "[t]he relationship between the intellectuals and the world of production … is, in varying degrees, 'mediated' by the whole fabric of society" (1989: 118).[58] 'Professional', treated in a similar way, ceases to indicate a set of refined processes which trade practitioners avow – or 'profess' – to offer as a service, but rather provides a starting point for question about the operations of power in social life.

Dovey (2015) usefully brings an initial treatment of professionalism into relation with film festival studies, arguing for the legitimacy of the 'global professional aspirations' of African filmmakers despite the racism many African filmmakers still experience on the global festival circuit (2015: 38). With reference to Carmela Garritano's work on the Ghanian video industry (2013), Dovey contributes an aspirational and political concept of professionalism in which African filmmakers are seen to re-appropriate a 'global professionalism' as part of their right to "participate fully as producers of their own cultural forms in the field of global culture" (Garritano 2013: 14; in Dovey 2015: 38). In her original reference to the term, Garritano refers to James Ferguson's work in *Expectations of Modernity* on 'urban style' as a "performative competence" (1999: 94-99), and extrapolates an understanding by which Ghanian "movies perform professionalism" (Garritano 2013: 115) through stating their thematic difference with other 'nonprofessional' film traditions (Garritano 2013: 101-102). While Ferguson himself never defines a 'professional' in this sense, Garritano's definition of global professionalism as an urban (or what Ferguson also calls a cultural or cosmopolitan) style offers us a useful place to start, in the spirit of the task set out by McKinnon, repositioning this concept within a critical 'post-development' framework.

Ferguson's notion of urban style has a complex operation, working at the nexus of three important considerations central to his work: a break with distinctions between urban/rural

[58] Gramsci uses the term 'professional' as a description of the function of an intellectual in society. As he writes, by intellectual "one is referring in reality only to the immediate social function of the professional category of the intellectuals" (1989: 115).

societies which tend to emphasise modern/traditional, European/African or educated/uneducated dualisms (1999: 83); a critique of traditional anthropological treatments of culture and society as "counterparts" and the promotion of a more situated appreciation of "cultural difference and its relation to social organisation" (1999: 93-94); and as a response to situationist critiques of poststructuralism, and in particular of performance theory (1999: 99). Ferguson elaborates upon these ideas in *Expectations of Modernity* (1999), a close anthropological study of urban workers in the Zambian Copperbelt, the northern most region of central Zambia which, due to its rich copper deposits, had undergone intense industrialisation from the 1920s. This industrialisation led to the urbanisation of the northern region of the Copperbelt, and the belief that by the 1980s the industrial boom "seemed sure to propel the new nation rapidly along the path of what was called 'modernisation'" (1999: 1). As Ferguson goes on to reveal, this early dream of industrial modernisation was short lived. Between the late 1970s and early 1990s, primarily due to the collapse in global copper prices, Zambia's economy entered a steady and devastating decline. While Ferguson admits that he had anticipated a more traditional urban/rural relationship in Zambia, and had expected to confront issues such as urban workers sending remittances to rural families, what he found was that Copperbelt migration had become "more a matter of leaving the city than coming to it" (1999: 82). Yet as Ferguson illustrates, through conversations with urban workers in this context of industrial decline, this idea of 'going home' is often not a socio-economic concern, but one expressed as "matters of dress, styles of speech, attitudes, habits, even body carriage" (1999: 83). It is in this context that Ferguson's theory of 'urban style' takes form, understood as those ways that urban Copperbelt Zambians express (and understand) their *difference* to rural life.

Accentuating his distinction from classical anthropological readings of culture as revelatory of underlying social structures, Ferguson defines this urban style as performative in nature, seen as as part of how the Copperbelt's urban labour communities perform their urbanity *in relation to* a rural counterpart. However, this theory of performance raises two important issues for Ferguson. Firstly, it risks implying a certain *ease* with which a person might slip into and out of different styles. Noting the long pedigree of an "analogy of culture and

clothing" (1999: 98) in anthropology, Ferguson goes on to suggest that urban style is closer to the analogy of fashion: "the key is not wearing a particular outfit but *being able* to wear it" (1999: 98). Style becomes, in this sense, a "performative competence" (1999: 96), something which "requires investment" and is "not easily acquired or effortlessly slipped off" (1999: 100). Secondly, Ferguson raises the issue that a poststructuralist theory of performance also risks paying too much attention to "enacted styles" (1999: 99) while failing to produce workable critiques of "the wider field of political-economic structures and social relationships" (1999: 99). In response, Ferguson makes two further specifications in his concept of 'style'. Drawing from the work of Judith Butler, he points out that style is "enacted under a 'situation of duress'" (1999: 99) – the duress, as he sees it, of the economic decline of Zambia in the 1990s. Finally, in a related reflection, Ferguson comments that such a style cannot be sufficiently thought of as an expression of individual choices and achievements, pointing out the "structural constraints" through which "subjects are interpellated by categorical systems" (1999: 101). By suggesting that styles are performed 'under duress' and their performers interpellated by their surroundings,[59] Ferguson is therefore able to tether his idea of the performative competence of style to its broader socio-economic implications.

If this might seem a slightly arduous accounting of Ferguson's concept, it is an important deviation in order to make it clear that an idea of professionalism as an urban style is not taken here as a simple corollary for a positive identification of 'the professional', nor as a simple difference to be measured against some other 'nonprofessional' identity. We take 'professional style' here as an enacted, performative, and not entirely intentional quality of how people present themselves and practice their work under 'situations of duress'. What this approach seeks to bring into question are therefore the various professional styles that can be seen to work through the SFF: those of Federico Olivieri, of local media activists and filmmakers, of myself, or of the festival's funders and donors. By turning to look at the professional, we start to open questions about the conflictual imbrication of individual aspiration and ambition, personal visions for the event, ideas about the proper professional

[59] I would additionally point out that interpellation itself seems to epitomise a 'situation of duress' *par excellence.*

function of the festival, and so forth. In this way, we start to complicate any assumed ideas about what a 'media professional' or 'development professional' might in fact be in the context of an aid-funded film festival in Mathare and Kibera.

Establishing a Professional Standing

The broadly observational vantage point of my research with the SFF between June and August 2012 left me frustrated. As a stranger to both the project and its community of filmmakers, silent understandings and unspoken agreements seemed to pass all around me. Many of the decisions that governed the festival had already been made, carried on from the preceding year, and it became difficult for me to acquire a strong sense of the event without relying too heavily on the recollections of its participants. I sat for hours during those early meetings, struggling to get my bearings within the discussion, let alone 'practise' in any critically meaningful sense. Perched on the edge of the Mabatini escarpment with young children and standing at Kwa Austin with men on their way back from local bars; sheltered beneath the central gazebo at Kamukunji as one of Hot Sun's 'special guests'; watching films and listening to speeches during the closing award ceremony, the SFF had often felt held at arm's length.

However when I returned in early 2013, the experience was very different. I was welcomed back eagerly by the Slum-TV and Hot Sun crews, now a more familiar face amongst the festival facilitators, and also I suspect largely by virtue of the fact that, unlike so many foreigners who visit organisations like Slum-TV, I had 'returned'.[60] Over the course of the SFF 2013, my position within the group began to shift considerably, from the broadly observational to the logistically, and ethically, entangled.

Keen to develop my research perspective along the lines of the 'practice-based' approach that I had begun to formulate in 2013, I started discussions with Slum-TV, Hot Sun and

[60] As Beatrice Kiamba, Slum-TV's zealous accountant, had put it while warning me to not do the same, foreigners often come to visit groups like Slum-TV, associated to one project or another, and then leave and never come back. It is with a certain bitter resignation that I recognise how I have since done just that. While my name is included in the SFF 2015's new festival brochure, and I am often kept in Cc: on many of the festival's communications, I myself remain absent from Mathare and Kibera, and have no immediate plans to return.

Federico Olivieri in February 2013 as to how I might take on a more practical role within the SFF community. Some of the SFF core team had changed for its third edition. Kenneth Wendo had moved on as manager of Slum-TV into a similar position at children's hospital 'edutainment' company, the Sarakasi Trust Hospital Project. Vincent Omuga had taken over Wendo's managerial position within Slum-TV in November 2012. The team for the facilitation of the SFF 2013 in Mathare therefore consisted of overall Slum-TV manager Vincent Omuga and accountant Beatrice Kiamba, as well as Collins Omondi who was eventually given the position of the overall SFF Festival Manager. Hot Sun Foundation's members had also expanded, with Josphat Keya overseeing the management of the group and Roy Okello taking up the position of Hot Sun's Festival Manager in Kibera. The rest of the Kibera festival facilitation team was primarily occupied by students from the Kibera Film School. Due to limited funding and commitments to other film festivals, Federico Olivieri, who throughout 2012 and 2013 was often deferred to as the overall authority in the SFF project, was based in Spain throughout the event's preparatory stages, communicating with the team primarily via Skype and email. Through funding from the Spanish Embassy for the support of Spanish artists, Olivieri was eventually able to come to Nairobi in August 2013 for the final preparatory month before the screenings started in early September.

During an initial meeting in February 2013 at the Slum-TV offices, my particular value to the SFF was identified in my writing skills, which were seen as useful in writing-up funding proposals and project pitches.[61] It was also judged that I would be able to help the festival 'network' with other groups and develop new partnerships, due to a perception that as a researcher I was well connected amongst Nairobi's aid and media organisations. I furthermore offered my technical knowledge in getting the Slum Film Festival website refurbished and back online, a responsibility which had become a point of contention after SFF 2012, with both Slum-TV and Hot Sun claiming that it was the other group's role to keep the site active. In this way my own 'professional' value and role was identified as part of and integral to the festival – a *style* that, as a researcher looking for more proximity to the SFF, I was eager to take on.

[61] This meeting, it bears noting, was not just about me. I was a minor item on a large agenda to kickstart the 2013 event.

Despite this initial careful definition of my role, once the festival's organisation was fully underway, my position in the organisation quickly transformed. A reduction in funding provided by the Spanish AECID due to the economic recession in Europe had made finding donors and sponsors for the festival one of the team's primary concerns in June and July 2013. In part because I was perceived as as belonging to the world of donors and sponsors, and since I already had the role of writing funding pitches, I was gradually given the more central task of actively fundraising for the organisation. Furthermore growing divergences and disagreements between the Hot Sun and Slum-TV teams in March and April 2013 about how the organisation of the SFF should be structured and managed lead to various instances of conflict, and eventually communication breakdowns, ignored emails, and rejected phone calls. This in turn led Federico Olivieri to rely more heavily on me as his connection to the event, commenting that his "view from here [Spain]" was composed through my "comments" and "reports" (Olivieri, *personal communication*, 29 May 2013).

Working primarily from the Mathare offices of Slum-TV, I grew increasingly conscious of my shifting position in the SFF project. Having taken on the roles of fundraiser and primary point of contact for founder and overall festival director Federico Olivieri, I had become what Collins Omondi called a 'mzito' (Swahili for 'heavy'), which in Sheng is used to signify a boss-figure who throws around their influence and cash. What my role within the SFF started to re-enact, rather than the practices of a 'projectionist' or 'programmer' or 'event organiser', more closely resembled the practices of Olivieri's own professional position in what he describes as a 'cultural operator'.[62] This had never been the intention of the research, and yet in pursuing the 'practices' of the project I had come in many ways to fulfil the roles and functions of a foreign cultural NGO worker. Reflecting on what this implies for this research approach, I will at the end of this chapter offer some thoughts on how a practice-based approach to researching a project like the SFF might, rather than offering a resistance to ethnocentric closure, in some ways in fact facilitate the re-enactment of prescriptive social and racial positionalities from which escape becomes impossible. To

[62] This term in the original Spanish of 'operador cultural' has little of the anglophone double meaning of 'an operator' as a shrewd or savvy manipulator. In the Spanish, the focus is placed more heavily on the technical and skill-based aspects of operating. Olivieri's use of the term signifies that while he himself does not produce cultural goods, he works with them and promotes them, 'operating' as a cultural sector facilitator.

what extent can a researcher – in this case, an anglophone male straddling the frictional roles of foreigner and stranger, mzungu and mzito, 'expert' researcher and networker – escape the totalising logic of the developmental frameworks with which we seek proximity? As I will reveal, while I started this study with a desire 'to practise' along side other media and development professionals, I eventually end up becoming practised *by* them.

The Drive to Formalisation

> My idea is that every specific body strives to become master over all space and to extend its force (– its will to power:) and thus thrust back all that resists its extension. But it continually encounters similar efforts on the part of other bodies and ends up coming to an arrangement ("union") with those of them that are sufficiently related to it: thus they then conspire together for power. And the process goes on–
>
> – Friedrich Nietzsche, *Will to Power* (1968): 340

As the preceding study of the SFF in 2012 indicated, the various standpoints, perspectives, motivations and agendas of different facilitators coalesced into an event that failed to achieve the kind of impact that it set out to accomplish. While the Closing Ceremony might have celebrated its unequivocal success, it was the event's failures that fixated early discussions about how the following 2013 edition of the SFF might be better approached. From a perspective shared by Josphat Keya and Collins Omondi, these failures were expressed almost exclusively in terms of the lack of clear centralised responsibilities which had eventually lead to the tensions between Hot Sun and Slum-TV that divided the events. Quite inversely, these same issues of miscommunication and division between facilitators were expressed by Federico Olivieri in relation to the festival's impact on its beneficiary communities, and the event's credentials as an effective cultural and developmental project. What emerged from this period of re-evaluation was a protracted conversation about refining and formalising the festival, a process that foregrounded differing articulations of the professional aspirations and styles that would come to delineate the SFF 2013. This drive to formalise the SFF, as I will show, provides an initial moment of discursive tension in which we might begin to elaborate an account of the different professional styles that demarcate the festival.

From Locally Activist to Globally Networked

Gathered in the offices of Slum-TV, we sat around a computer while Skype attempts to re-connect us to Olivieri. Joshpat Keya had made the trip over from Kibera; accordingly, the next meeting would be hosted by Hot Sun. Keya, regularly deferred to as the most senior facilitator of the SFF in Kibera, puts himself forward first and foremost as an artist. He is casually dressed, with short dreadlocks and a beaded bracelet in the colours of the Kenyan flag on one wrist. The red-coloured Hot Sun Foundation logo runs across his black t-shirt. A local to Kibera, Keya was one of the first graduates from the Kibera Film School, and quickly climbed to become Project Manager for Hot Sun Foundation, one of only two permanent positions at the organisation. Spending time with Keya, it is easy to understand why: he is charming and an intelligent speaker, brimming with a slightly nervous energy and an eagerness to get things done. Next to him, Collins Omondi seems formal, almost stiff. In his typical office outfit, Omondi wears straight black trousers and a v-neck jumper over a collared shirt, and is never without his notepad and bic ballpoint pen. Unlike Keya, who speaks of himself as a filmmaker, Omondi often refers to his work with Slum-TV as a way to avoid needing to 'hustle' for money elsewhere. He is evidently serious about audiovisual media – primarily interested in cinematography and photography – however where Keya talks excitedly about making a feature film, Omondi describes his future ambition as setting up and running his own film production company. Omondi's interests naturally shift toward logistics and organisation.

With us are Beatrice Kiamba, Slum-TV's fastidious accountant, and Slum-TV's new overall manager Vincent Omuga who, as Omondi half-jokingly puts it, had stopped showing up on time to meetings since he'd become the boss. I, on the other hand, must seem like an oddity, always accompanied by a large jacket (despite the heat), pockets bulging with a voice recorder, a digital camera, a small notebook, pens, and two mobile phones. The five of us sit together as a pixilated Federico Olivieri flickers onto the screen for a instant, followed by garbled words. Without a wired network around Mlango Kubwa, we rely on mobile dongles for our connection, and connectivity depends on patchy mobile network

coverage. Eventually we switch off the video feed and suffice with Olivieri's disembodied voice.

This experience is characteristic of the early SFF meetings during March and April 2013, although eventually we stopped trying to include Olivieri directly and relied on email-based communication and the circulation of meeting minutes. Reflecting on the challenges of the 2012 event during these early meetings, Olivieri became concerned with the disagreements between Hot Sun and Slum-TV that had lead to division within the SFF organisation, resulting in an effective splitting of the festival into two separate events at Kibera and Mathare. In opposition to this split, Olivieri's own vision of the SFF remained one of creating a unified festival experience. Between SFF 2011 and SFF 2012 he had already suggested a move from a 'Kenyan' to an 'East African' focus in the festival's programming. Between SFF 2012 and SFF 2013, Olivieri proposed a further shift from an 'East African' to a 'Pan-African' perspective, and advising a change of the SFF slogan to "African Slums on the Reel". As Olivieri reasserted several times during these early discussions, he was interested in building a global Slum Film Festival "brand" (Olivieri, *personal communications*, 25 February 2013), reaching out to create local partnerships with facilitators in slums across the world. This SFF 'brand' would be built upon a centralised organisation, which could then enter into agreements for local screenings with facilitating partners, eventually becoming what Olivieri called a "networked festival" (*SFF 2013 pitch*, April 2013). This new SFF organisational structure would see a shift therefore away from the SFF as a 'project' hosted by different organisations, to a 'brand' and a centralised set of agreed processes which could then be more divisively 'implemented' in different locations.

As a way of developing such a structure, I proposed to Olivieri that the SFF could be legally established as an NGO or CBO (Community-based Organisation), with its own management body and accounting process. This idea was taken up and proposed to the facilitating partners in a coordinating committee meeting on 20 March 2013. Yet during the meeting members from Hot Sun seemed reluctant to accept the proposal for a new organisation. Slum-TV's members similarly seemed unwilling to commit to Olivieri's change,

with both organisations deferring the decision to their respective 'Board of Directors', who would be required to approve all broader organisational decisions. Olivieri struggled to understand this reluctance to approve a measure that he considered empowering of the SFF. Yet there was a sense of discomfort from Keya and Omuga in discussing the rearrangement, and their deferral of the decision seemed to indicate that the question sat beyond their professional remit.

While the SFF to Olivieri was very much a stand-alone project, entangled in his vision for the expansion and greater impact of the event, for its facilitating partners it was just one project among many on the roster that constituted their respective organisations. Despite Olivieri's inclusive approach, in keeping with an idea of 'cooperation development' that sought to work with local community actors, this distinction underlined a subtle imbalance in the relations of this cooperation within the coordinating committee: for Olivieri the SFF was his personal project, while for other facilitators the project belonged to their respective employers, a fact which diminishes their own personal power, despite the rhetoric of inclusion; participation, we are reminded, is not necessarily the same thing as empowerment, despite its common naturalisation as such.

Despite the lack of decision regarding a legal establishment of an independent SFF organisation, the need to centralise and coordinate the implementation of the SFF remained a paramount concern amongst facilitators. Josphat Keya reflected that the biggest issue with the SFF in 2012 had been the lack of clarity regarding the roles of various organisers, commenting that everybody was giving orders, but nobody was responsible for actually carrying them out (Keya, *SFF coordinating committee meeting*, 20 March 2013). In 2012, despite efforts to keep things uniform, both facilitating partners designed separate SFF t-shirts – what Collins Omondi repeatedly referred to as 'the issue with the t-shirts' – as well as screened their own schedules of films, while the joint closing ceremony was organised at the last minute, and nobody knew who was responsible for central tasks such as engraving awards or printing award certificates. As such, it was decided that, regardless of the question of the incorporation of a Slum Film Festival NGO or

CBO, a 'Festival Manager' position was required to oversee the event, acting independently of both organisations. Keya, who proposed this interim position, noted that the manager should be secured through a competitive public job application. However, worrying that the lack of immediately available funding would make this difficult, it was eventually agreed that Hot Sun and Slum-TV would propose members from their own teams to take up the position.

Having established the need for an overall Festival Manager, the second key point to emerge during the reevaluation of the event was the issue of funding, and the need for a new festival budget. Olivieri's initial discussions with the coordinating committee emphasised the restriction of funding from the AECID due to Spain's economic recession, which had resulted in heavy spending cuts within the Spanish Embassy in Kenya (Olivieri, *SFF communication*, 11 February 2013). A strong emphasis was therefore placed on how to present a clear, simple budget to prospective donors, within the framework of a pitch document which highlighted the features the SFF's new edition. It was proposed by Slum-TV's accountant Beatrice Kiamba that the budget for the festival should be centrally managed, and certain costs shared, so as to stop the replication of expenses such as printing promotional material.

While this was readily agreed to in principle, the determination of what costs should be central and what should remain with each organisation would prove contentious. The majority of these expenses were to be the salary of centralised personnel, such as the overall Festival Manager. However, one suggested centralisation, proposed by Keya, was a film production who would be team responsible for the documentation of the festival event with an eye to future promotional opportunities. Keya reflected that in 2012, the team in charge of this documentation was based out of Kibera, and accordingly all the footage used for the SFF's promotional material was from the Kibera event. This, Keya claimed, failed to accurately represent the "whole festival" (Keya, *SFF coordinating committee meeting*, 24 April 2013). As a result, it was decided that, along with the budget and the overall management, the documentation of the festival should also be managed centrally. As with

the interim management position, a ‘competitive bid’ was opened for filmmakers based at both organisations to apply for the job of documenting the SFF 2013 and editing audiovisual material into short promotional films. This decision seemed to mark, along with a desire to cohere the management and budget around centralised processes, an intention to begin to stabilise representations of the ‘whole festival’, and contribute to the clarification of the ‘slum film festival brand’ toward which Olivieri saw himself working.

This notion of ‘formalisation' is therefore not simply the process of better aligning the practices of the SFF with the ‘rules’ or ‘mandates’ laid out in its programme of work. Rather, formalisation is itself a set practices in which what is at stake is precisely the articulation of ideas about what the festival was, and how it should operate. To draw these reflections back to the language of professional style, our attention is turned to how different professional ambitions were drawn into distinction with each other through the very practices of ‘formalising’ the SFF. It is notable that evaluations of SFF 2012 were articulated by participants at both Hot Sun and Slum-TV in relation to the SFF’s perceived organisational and managerial structures, and not the content, impact or cultural relevance of the overall festival. The priority during this period of reevaluation and reflection was the particular relationship between the two organisations, and how their respective groups were to be reflected in the management and control of the event. When the issue of the proliferation of submissions in 2012 from Hot Sun Foundation’s Kibera Film School was raised by Collins Omondi (Omondi, *SFF Coordinating Committee Meeting*, 20 March 2013), it was in terms of Omondi’s perception of Hot Sun trying to use the SFF for its own purposes, and the need to institute centralised festival processes designed to prevent this from happening. In an argument which focused on whether or not the students of Hot Sun’s Kibera Film School programme would feel unfairly discriminated against, it was eventually agreed that both facilitating partners would be limited to three submissions per SFF film category. During moments such as these, a formalisation of SFF’s processes was sought in the context of an attempt to suture the divisions between Hot Sun and Slum-TV. The discussion of ‘centralising’ SFF’s organisational processes was positioned by Josphat Keya, Collins Omondi and Beatrice Kiamba as a way in which to better define roles and

responsibilities within the festival's management, and to address the disagreements that had emerged between the two groups. What seemed paramount here was the assertion of the place and role of both Slum-TV and Hot Sun – and its participants – within the SFF.

For Federico Olivieri, these same qualities of centralisation were articulated very differently, drawing relations between Olivieri's specific desire to elaborate upon the overall 'vision' of the festival and establish a 'slum film festival brand'. Such a vision from Olivieri emerged not from his role as a media activist or producer working in Mathare or Kibera, but rather from his professional association to other global film festivals, such as FCAT, which established for Olivieri a standard for professional practice that he felt needed to be in place within the SFF, and could help elevate the festival toward new global ambitions. This resulted in an approach to the centralisation of the overall management of the SFF that was related to a situational abstraction from the specific context of Mathare and Kibera. For Olivieri the purpose of the festival was not to simply address the communities of Kibera and Mathare, but instead embodied his ambition to "eventually see festivals running in several more slums around the world" (*Proposal for a new Slum Film Festival Organisation*, 20 March 2013: 2).

This distinction of professional ambitions signifies a variation in the professional styles operating within the organisation. This professionalism is styled in relation to, on the one hand, a success measured in terms of a professional standing of local filmmakers and media activists working within very particular communities, and on the other, as success measured against an international ambition of combatting the 'slum issue' on a global scale. Seen in this way, the divisions between the SFF's organisers mark a divergence amongst facilitators such that articulations about what the SFF *is* and *how is should function* disagree as to the perceived social and cultural value of the SFF. As such, the conversations of the formalisation of the SFF, while functioning within the parameters of a certain shared language, drew relations between very different sets of interests. Facilitators, producers and filmmakers such as Omondi, Omuga and Keya positioned the event within the interest of their organisations and perceived beneficiary communities.

Olivieri – who identifies his role as a 'cultural operator' in distinction to that of a donor or media producer – can be seen to exercise a distinct agenda of establishing a more 'professional' film festival, measured against the success of festivals that he had experienced elsewhere. As such, while Olivieri launched several discussions about the centralisation and formalisation of the festival event – and while these conversations were taken up and carried forward willingly by the coordinating committee – the actualisation of these changes told a very different story.

(Dis)Appointment of an Interim Festival Manager

One of the main points raised through reevaluation was the need for an overall Festival Manager – somebody who could take on the centralised responsibilities for the entire event. However, while an open call of candidates between Hot Sun and Slum-TV was announced on 20 March 2013, in a following meeting on 3 April 2013 no submissions were made by Hot Sun, and only Collins Omondi has been submitted from Slum-TV. Josphat Keya was absent from the 3 April meeting, represented instead by Hot Sun Foundation's SFF event manager Roy Okello, and the decision to appoint Omondi as the only applicant for the role of Festival Manager was passed without much discussion. However, this decision was met some weeks later with a written rejection by Keya, who instructed the coordinating committee that they should review the decision and open a new call (Keya, *coordinating committee communication*, 23 April 2013). Omondi responded by text-message to me personally, stating that "I'm not buying the idea that Josphat has, I guess he wants someone from Hot Sun to take over" (Omondi, *personal communication*, 23 April 2013). As a member of Slum-TV, employed only on a project-by-project basis, Omondi was understandably protective of the salary that came with the appointment, on several occasions reflecting how he would regret having to go back to 'hustling' in Mathare if he was not able to get more regular work through Slum-TV. In her in-depth work on entrepreneurship in Mathare, critical geographer Tatiana Thieme presents an account of Mathare's 'hustler economy' as at once part of informal economic activity – such as waste collection – as well as simultaneously enmeshed with issues of self-identification amongst Nairobi's urban youth (2013, 2015). The exchange over Omondi's contract as a Festival

Manager highlighted, on Omondi's part, the articulation of a kind of professionalism in difference to this 'hustler' life, and a way to escape the economic instability of subsistence filmmaking in a slum, and as a way of 'formalising' employment within a largely 'informal' (or unreliable and largely subsistence-based) economy.

Olivieri responded to Keya's call for a new appointment by requesting, via email, that due to a shortage of time, the group either accept Omondi as an *interim* Festival Manager, or quickly accept new applications and appoint an appropriate manager. In response, Josphat Keya accepted Omondi as Interim Manager, and requested an emergency meeting on 24 April 2013 during which the committee should agree on a Terms of Reference (ToR) for the posting, in which the Interim Manager's roles and responsibilities would be clarified. The meeting, which took place in a small back office at Hot Sun Foundation in Kibera, was attended by Keya, Omondi and myself. During the meeting Keya ran through the ToR, prepared in advance by the Hot Sun team, in which they had specified the exact tasks of a Festival Manager. Throughout the entire meeting, Omondi hardly spoke, apart for moments of acceptance or agreement, offering: "For me, I'm comfortable with ... everything you say" (Omondi, *SFF coordinating committee meeting*, 24 April 2013). Omondi's passivity was striking, especially considering that the tasks Keya listed as the responsibility of the Interim Festival Manager were far in excess of any single person's ability, and included overseeing both events, organising both workshops, managing all social media content, producing printed promotional material and awards, and organising the entire closing awards ceremony.

Speaking during the matatu bus ride back across town from Kibera to Mathare, Omondi explained that his silence was simply due to the fact that he didn't have anything in particular to add, and was already aware of the roles he was expected to perform during the event. Having initially understood the meeting as part of the organisational process of clearly defining roles, it occurred to me that I might have in fact missed its actual purpose. Omondi of course already understood the responsibility of his role – he had been undertaking similar work throughout the previous year's event, and was present at every

SFF committee meeting. Rather than the principled act of carefully defining ToR for a new job posting, the meeting stood instead as a kind of professional performance, part of a practice by Hot Sun of self-affirmation within a newly emerging organisational dynamic. The meeting and following conversation with Omondi left me with the feeling that, while outwardly an act of centralisation and coordination, the process of selecting an overall Festival Manager in effect provided simply another theatre for the professional division between facilitating organisations.

Keya's stated interest in setting clear roles and responsibilities related to his issues with the communication breakdowns that had marred SFF 2012. On the other hand, Olivieri had understood the division between Hot Sun and Slum-TV as a lack of 'seriousness' and sense of entitlement amongst facilitating partners. His position seemed to emerge from a feeling that both groups were fixated on their personal goals, not fully committed to the festival as a 'shared effort' (Olivieri, *personal communication*, 23 April 2013). Olivieri further insisted that, whoever was selected for the Festival Manager position should give up any ongoing work with their host organisation and work on the festival full-time. To Olivieri this was an effort to prevent "bias" within the new manager toward any particular organisation (Olivieri, *personal communication*, 23 April 2013).

While this point from Olivieri came from an earnest desire to diminish the role of vested interests in what he envisioned to be a unified and eventually global film festival, this request for professional autonomy had profound implications. Not only was the position of an overall Festival Manager made economically precarious by the appointment becoming 'interim' rather than full-time, but furthermore, and on Olivieri's request, the young slum-based filmmaker who took on this interim position was additionally requested to cut all of his pre-existing professional relationships with the organisation that had trained him. Omondi readily accepted this request without comment, with the same passivity as he had accepted Keya's ToR, claiming unequivocally that he would act independently. This, of course, was not the case. There was no separate office from which an overall SFF Manager might operate, and so Omondi simply returned to work out of Slum-TV. The

organisation of the SFF carried on as usual, with the only difference being that now Omondi was officially responsible for making sure that both events were run smoothly, in return for which he was guaranteed a salary of 25,000 Kenyan Shillings (approximately GBP £150) per month for a fixed period of ten months.

While Omondi might have previously articulated his own professionalism as distinct from 'hustling', his passive acquiescence to and casual disregard of professional requests can be seen as something similar to a 'hustle'. This is a 'hustle' as Thieme (2013) theorises it: as the innovative entrepreneurship of people living on the fringes of a formal economy. It is in this sense a notion entangled with Joyce Nyairo's valorisation of 'jua kali' as a metaphor for an economic revitalisation amongst the traditionally disenfranchised. Nyairo offers the penetrating reflection:

> And while mimicry and vapid imitation may be stages in the modification of imported styles and products, the goal of the acquisitive *jua kali* ethos is the renewal of local circumstance and resources; the revitalisation of local social, cultural and economic capital.
>
> Nyairo 2007: 148

As Nyairo fascinatingly indicates, this jua kali attitude, which I have linked here explicitly with an idea of 'hustling', operates as a kind of acquisition – and *modification* – of style. Omondi's attitude toward his appointment can be seen as him 'hustling' the SFF, not in the sense that he intended to shirk his responsibilities, but rather as an acquisition of a professional opportunity presented with impossible conditions, which was then appropriated and modified within a framework conducive to Omondi's own circumstances. His passive acquiescence to Olivieri and Keya's 'rules' can in this way be seen as a kind of mimicry of 'formalisation', and part of practices of *de*-formalising and 'revitalising' the economic capital of the SFF.

Centralising and Replicating Costs in the Budget

One further seemingly innocuous and yet eventually significant moment in the reorganisation of the SFF emerged in the need for a centralised festival budget. The cost of the establishment of an independent Festival Manager position, as well as shared costs

such as t-shirt and promotional materials printing, needed to be separated – as Slum-TV accountant Beatrice Kiamba argued – from costs incurred during specific screenings in either Mathare and Kibera. One of key motivations behind the need for defining a clear festival budget, as Olivieri pointed out, also came from the organisation's urgent need to attract new donors and sponsors. The festival's primary funder, the Spanish Embassy in Kenya, had withdrawn most of its financial support, offering only to organising the festival's Press Conference and eventually to cover Olivieri's travel costs for him to personally participate in the final month of the event's preparation. As of June 2013 the festival had only reached approximately 10% of its initial funding target of US $11,000, provided by the Belgian NGO Africalia through their annual support of Hot Sun and Slum-TV.

The overall festival budget, prepared by Beatrice Kiamba, Collins Omondi and myself at Slum-TV in May 2013, attempted to synthesise the Kibera-specific costs submitted by Hot Sun with costs from Slum-TV, and then carefully separate facilitating partner costs from a new 'central' list of expenses. These central costs included expenses for printing promotional material, costs associated with organising the closing awards ceremony and having submitted films judged, and a budget for a centralised film production team to document both festivals and produce promotional audiovisual material for the event. The central budget also covered salaries for the Interim Festival Manager, as well a social media officer and a 'central accountant'. This would, in theory at least, provide a certain overarching authority to certain central functions required to keep the SFF running, to which – in keeping with Olivieri's vision of a global 'slum film festival brand' – local facilitating partners would then be attached. Yet, while a social media officer was never appointed, with this cost eventually dissolved into Omondi's ever expanding list of responsibilities, Beatrice Kiamba became the de facto central accountant. As such, while the 'formalisation' of the SFF had in part led the centralisation of festival costs – and by extension the synthesis of a certain independence within the organisation from its own facilitating partners – in practice this notional 'centralisation' effectuated a shift of management control toward Slum-TV.

Hot Sun responded to this new, centralised budget with total silence. They refused to either commit to or reject the budget, and instead stalled the provision of their key Kibera-specific costs for as long as possible. It was not until a potential festival sponsor, the Italian medical health NGO World Friends, demanded a clearer budgetary plan in July 2013 that Hot Sun provided a response. The Kibera-specific budget they eventually produced represented almost exactly half of the total festival budget, and three-times the budget allocated for Mathare-specific activities. All centralised costs had been simply assimilated into the inflation of other budget lines. While Olivieri interpreted this as a lack of seriousness on the part of Hot Sun to properly commit themselves to the SFF, Kiamba suggested that it was instead a statement by Hot Sun that they were going to manage their own affairs.

Taking over Hot Sun's budget, Slum-TV decided to prepare a budget on behalf of Hot Sun that was feasible to present to donors – with Kiamba, Omondi and myself working through each line and stripping away any duplications or overlapping costs. Once funding was eventually secured, half of it would be given to Hot Sun, and the SFF would proceed almost entirely unchanged – at least from a fiscal point of view – from its 2012 edition. While the division of the SFF's central costs from location-specific costs appeared to be a fairly simple task at the outset, the actualisation of their separation in practice was therefore quite different. In setting a central budget, what was asserted was a form of control by Slum-TV, which further alienated the Hot Sun team within the festival's emerging management 'formalisation'. In her work on 'hustle' economies, Thieme insightfully reflects on how amongst 'ghetto' entrepreneurs in Mathare the "logics of solidarity and self-help" are "paradoxically coupled with peer pressure to keep struggling" (2015: 237). In a related sense, the developmental professional style, presented here as embodied in Olivieri's ambition for the SFF to have the greatest possible reach and impact, is paradoxically coupled with a kind of professional hustling in which groups outwardly dedicated to Olivieri's vision work toward their own self-promotion, and the assertion of their own professional standing within their particular community. There emerges here a tension, which was recognised in a different form in the 2012 event, between a discourse of the 'slum' in general, and a discourse more closely related to the social dynamics at work

amongst facilitating partners and their relationship as cultural producers within their particular communities.

Networks of Privilege

Having settled the budget, even without Hot Sun's direct approval or input, the struggle to raise funds for the festival in the wake of the withdrawal of Spanish Embassy support became pronounced. A small amount of funding had been promised by Africalia at the end of the previous edition, and while no actual transfer of funding had been made, both Hot Sun and Slum-TV were happy to continue organising the event at a minimal capacity until further funding arrived. Yet as the July 2013 deadline for committing serious resources to the coming 2013 edition loomed, it became increasingly evident that nobody was in fact responsible for finding such funding. In the meantime, both organisations continued to commit resources and time to the event – most notably, the time of employees like Collins Omondi and Roy Okello, each subsistence filmmakers and neither holding salaried positions within their respective organisations. While voluntarism may be a fairly common feature of film festivals around the world, the members of Slum-TV and the Hot Sun Foundation were themselves the *beneficiaries* of development funding, as much as they were agents in building and supporting a development project. After all, filmmakers such as Omondi and Keya were trained and supported as filmmakers by Africalia not because of any long catalogue of established work, nor through the hope of eventual returns on investment to be aggregated through successful film productions, but exactly because they were from a slum. They were certainly not philanthropists or interns in the privileged position of being able to work without income, but were young professionals seeking as much exposure to filmmaking as possible, as well as 'jua kali' (Nyario 2007) creative labourers eager to be part of the budget lines of burgeoning new projects.

Notably, the SFF project had effectively been delivered to both Hot Sun and Slum-TV with full funding from the AECID in 2011. And yet, somewhat symptomatic of being a small financial commitment within the extensive schedule of developmental engagements of a

much larger organisation – in this case, the Spanish government's Agency for International Development Cooperation – this funding had proved unstable, reviewed on a year-by-year basis, and subject to sudden discontinuation as the interests or circumstances of its donor organisation shifted. However when funding from AECID was discontinued, it is notable that the *assumption* of continued funding remained, marking a pervasive passivity within the expectations of facilitators that recalls Idha Nancy's comment of the preceding year: that slum-based filmmakers such as herself are simply "waiting for somebody to give us the money". What this moment draws our attention to is the position of facilitators within the SFF as development actors and cultural producers, and also as the *subjects* of the development programme through which they are acting. Even though they were partners and central participants in the SFF project, when funding ran out the members of the group were unable to secure a continuation of their own work, and were compelled to fall back on support from 'development' professionals. As such, this moment of fundraising within the SFF 2013 invites new reflections on the question of the relationship between 'participation' and 'empowerment' as they are articulated within the dynamics of culturalised development.

In beginning to stitch together an understanding of how these various connections were exercised within the SFF, a concept of 'networks' will be used. Posing a particular challenge, the metaphor 'network' has not only been treated as a philosophically complex notion within both media sociology and anthropology as a way to engage with qualities of decentralisation in social and communicative connectivity (see, for example, Terranova (2004) on the internet, or Riles (2000) on the anthropology of professional networks), but it has also risen to a position of prominence in everyday anglophone parlance. Olivieri, for example, referred regularly to his vision of the SFF as part of a 'global network', and we often hear of ideas like 'professional networks', 'social networks', 'networking events'. What then do I mean by a network and into what sort of productive relationship might we bring it with the 'professional styles' of the SFF?

Anthropologist Annalise Riles makes the notion of a professional network central to her investigation in *The Network Inside Out* (2000). While Riles argues that the anthropological study of a network remains a study of "concrete activities" (2000: 3), she offers a broader understanding of a 'Network'[63] that operates as "a set of institutions, knowledge practices, and artefacts thereof that internally generate the condition of their own reality by reflecting on themselves" (2000: 3). Riles' study focuses on the people and activities of members of governmental and nongovernmental organisations in Suva, Fiji that were involved in the United Nation's Fourth World Conference on Women, and is unrelenting in her methodological problematisation of how she seeks to capture the "flurry of international activity" (2000: 2) that defined her study. As Riles goes on to point out, the effectiveness of the Network in this broader sense "is generated by the Network's self-description" (2000: 172). Positioning her study as a critical anthropologist speaking to accounts of global/ international networks advanced by "modernist sociology" (2000: 3), Riles indicates here the problem of what we are actually talking about when we talk about 'networks'. Vitally, what Riles directs our attention to is that fact that while the world may be full of talk about 'networks' as the objective form of connectivity, how communication and connection operate within situated reality is in fact far more complex and subjective. I would like to take up the notion of the network in this contradictory and ironic mode: as something which at once insists on its 'own reality', and yet is based around contingent, changeable, and situated relationships. In this sense, we might turn to speak of the relationships between Nairobi's various NGO actors, between Olivieri and other film festivals, or European cultural initiatives across the city; of Slum-TV's network amongst local filmmakers and community actors, or such filmmakers amongst themselves. Seen in this way, the articulation of professional style is taken as in part articulated through the practices of 'networking': of affirming, exercising, or experiencing the inaccessibility to, the various 'networks' which demarcate different cultural and developmental sectors in Nairobi.

[63] Riles uses the capitalised form 'Network' to distinguish this 'broader' definition of a Network, from the more casual sense of a network between people (networkers), as part of a set of professional practices of 'networking'.

Penetrating the 'Slum Market'

The precarious funding position that the SFF found itself in following the withdrawal of AECID's financial support resulted in a series of emergency strategy meetings, in which committee members exchanged ideas on how to save the SFF. In an interesting strategic revelation, it was unanimously agreed by the group that funding from as many different sponsor organisations as possible should be a priority. As Vincent Omuga put it, a large number of sponsors would be beneficial as, while one sponsor might promote a particular issue or programme, a large group of sponsors would diffuse this capacity to dictate terms (Omuga, *personal communication*, 17 September 2013). A key funding target within this diffuse approach was to include profitable corporate organisations, groups that Josphat Keya argued would be interested so long as they saw it as an opportunity to penetrate the "slum market" (Keya, *SFF committee meeting*, 24 April 2013), sponsoring the event in exchange for branding exposure. Both Keya and Omondi argued for the benefits of such corporate sponsorship over either NGO or European cooperation development funding, suggesting that development-oriented funders were generally thought to want to exert control over cultural work. More significantly, Omondi also implied that being associated to a large company would be perceived better by communities in Kibera and Mathare than being identified as an NGO or development project.

This reflection indicates once again the complex double operation of the slum-based filmmaker's professional style as simultaneously developmental, and yet also aspiring to become a professional *beyond* the limits of life defined in relation to the work of an NGO. However, with exception of a cursory meeting between Omondi and a contact of his at telecommunication company Safaricom, no significant progress was made in securing corporate sponsorship for the event. Despite strong arguments for non-developmental funding, facilitators within the SFF simply lacked sufficient access to the networks of corporate Nairobi. Furthermore, while there might very well have been some interest in a local company sponsoring a public event in Mathare or Kibera,[64] there was also a strong

[64] Telecommunication company ZUKU's 10-year sponsorship deal with Zanzibar-based film festival ZIFF comes to mind here as an example of the corporate take-over of an African film festival (Slavkovic 2015: 208).

sense that this notion of capitalising upon a ‘slum market’ emerged not from the existence of such a market, but is rather an expression of the professional styles of filmmakers looking to imagine both themselves and their work as belonging to something more than ‘the slum’ as articulated in relation to its need for development. Olivieri, in parallel and through very different networks, attempted to establish funding from amongst his contacts both in Nairobi’s European embassies – he had hoped to rekindle funding from the Spanish Embassy in particular – as well as from amongst his professional contacts amongst film festivals elsewhere.[65] The Spanish government eventually provided a small funding stipend to cover Olivieri’s expenses so he could travel to Nairobi and work directly with the festival in August 2013. Yet it is notable that, given the economic recession, the Spanish Embassy had heavily restricted cultural funding in Nairobi. In order to work around this, Olivieri in fact applied for the funding not on behalf of the SFF, but for himself as a Spanish ‘artist’. He was therefore able to qualify for government funding allocated for providing support to Spanish creative professionals.

Beyond this, there was cursory interest from the Italian and British embassies for potential future involvement, as well as a continuation of the provision of facilities – but not financial support – from French cultural institute, the Alliance Française. While Olivieri's professional network amongst film festivals also failed to result in direct funding, it did stimulate a flow of feature film productions from other festivals toward the SFF 2013, something that played a vital role in Olivieri’s eventual ability to curate an idea of ‘global slums’ through the film screenings. As part of this approach, Olivieri asked me to connect the SFF to the UK-based Royal African Society, the group that facilitates London’s Film Africa festival and with whom I had briefly worked in 2012. The Society was responsive, and provided GBP £1000 support funding in exchange for the SFF helping to source new films for exhibition. This deviation into inter-festival sponsorship – while not particularly successfully as a source of funding – briefly elevated the SFF into the broader dynamics of a global cinema economy, providing an insightful glimpse of the kind of “globally networked” festival that Olivieri had in mind for the event.

[65] Olivieri’s own long-standing professional relationship with the FCAT festival in Spain was the starting point for this inter-festival outreach.

In spite this effort, funding for the SFF 2013 was far from forthcoming. I had helped to set up an online crowd-sourcing platform for the festival, which was circulated around the friends and contacts of anybody associated to the event, and attracted around GBP £1000 in donations to supplement what was already being provisioned by Africalia. By July 2013, it seemed possible that the entire event would have to run on a skeleton crew, with the absolute minimum output required to carry in into the next year, when the committee could try again. In an attempt to maximise the festival's coverage of potential donors, the committee members eventually asked me to help connect them to prospective partners amongst the network of media and development organisations that I had been connected to through my research. In an interesting reflection on the contours of disconnection that line Nairobi's media environment, I – a migratory ethnographer and relative stranger to the city – was perceived as better oriented within the city's funding circles than practitioners working with media NGO in some of the city's least affluent neighbourhoods.

Despite this perception, the reality of my own network was far more limited. I reached out to whomever I thought might be able to connect me to a funding body of some sort. This included the Ford Foundation's Kenya office, whom I had connected with during a brief acquaintance with one of their beneficiary projects, the satirical television programme *The XYZ Show* (2009 onwards). Separately UNESCO[66] reached out to me after I circulated the SFF's project brief to Nairobi-based journalists and contacts of mine working across various parts of the UN. However these initial expressions of interest eventually led nowhere. It was in fact the chance mention of the SFF project to Marcella Ferracciolo of CISP, with whom I was concurrently working on the Wazi project, that led to the SFF 2013's most substantial funding contribution. While talking one day at the CISP offices in Lavington, Ferracciolo casually asked me about how my research was going. While explaining the festival project to her, she mentioned that her husband, Gianfranco Morino, would be very interested in hearing about the SFF's work. Hearing that the festival was looking for new partnerships, Ferracciolo led me to the ground floor of their building where medical health NGO World Friends maintained a small office. World Friends runs hospitals and medical health tents,

[66] The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

providing healthcare services to various communities throughout Kenya. Gianfranco Morino, a medical doctor who setup and runs the NGO, chatted through the festival with me, before organising a following meeting to include Collins Omondi and other members of World Friends. Within a few weeks, the NGO had committed to covering the SFF's remaining budget for the coming 2013 event – a figure in the region of US$7000.

Several days later, a few members of the SFF coordinating committee met with the World Friends team in an empty lecture hall on a large medical complex outside the city. Here we went over the legal details of the arrangement, which primarily consisted in clarifying how World Friends logos would be displayed on printed and digital material, as well as the possibility of World Friends setting up a medical tent, such that they could offer free medical advice during screenings.[67] When I asked the Jacopo Rovarini, who led the facilitation of the funding partnership between SFF and Worlds Friends, why a medical health NGO would be interested in putting money into film festival, his answer was very forthright. Their NGO keeps money aside each year to invest in non-medical projects, and our request for funding happened to coincide with the end of their financial year. They had money to left over that they needed to officially spend within the next few months. However as Gianfranco Morino later clarified, World Friends was also very interested in doing more work in the Mathare area. As he explained it, the neighbourhood of Kibera was saturated with medical health groups and was a very difficult location for an NGO like World Friends to establish itself. Mathare alternatively provided a good environment for their work, however they lacked local access. While using my networks to establish the relationships required to help secure funding, the SFF was in turn perceived to provide legitimacy to an organisation trying to establish itself in a new environment. Josphat Keya's sentiment of a 'slum market' seemed to return here, if not in the corporate sense he had meant it. The slum market, to the medical NGO World Friends, was instead a market of potential new subjects for medical aid, and the SFF represented a way of penetrating its developmental potential.

[67] Logistically this proved too complex, and the idea was eventually dropped.

What stands out above anything else from this episode of fundraising is how deeply cut-off local media activists are from the sources of funding upon which much of their work depends. Even amongst people in positions of relative seniority such as Josphat Keya, the networks from which to draw funding were almost entirely closed. This is redoubled by the fact that a relative outsider such as myself – that is to say, an outsider to the organisations, as well as a foreigner within the environments of Kibera and Mathare – was more readily able to secure sponsorship from amongst Nairobi's network of media-interested NGOs than people living and working for years within its 'beneficiary' communities. It would seem that, irrespective of the relatively short time I had spent working in the city, I was able to quickly become an 'insider' to various other aspects of Nairobi's aid economy: in this case, an insider to the closed network of European cooperation development and its privileged funding ecology. I notably offered very little to justify this privileged access. Other committee members and organisers at the SFF were filmmakers, producers, and event managers with years of experience working as professionals and activists within their communities. As somebody perceived to be a professional foreigner working with some connection to the aid sector, with a certain level of education (and by association, privilege and relative wealth)[68] – in short, exactly because of my *distinction* from 'beneficiaries' or subjects of development – I was afforded a level of *de facto* trust within Nairobi's development networks that would have been closed off to Keya or Omondi.

Networks and Material Constraints of Film Solicitation

As funding was secured for SFF 2013, the organising committee's focus quickly shifted to aggregating a schedule of films for inclusion. After a discussion about how the outdoor screening events should be structured, with the argument made by Josphat Keya that the preceding year's films were often too short, it was agreed that a feature length film should sit at the heart of each festival event. However it was noted that the submissions that the festival attracts, from small-scale media production groups similar to Hot Sun and Slum-TV, were not likely to be feature length. Olivieri therefore proposed a division of the screen schedule into 'competitive' and 'non-competitive' submission categories. The plan was to

[68] I had after all *chosen* to work in Mathare and Kibera, unlike most people I was working with.

solicit submissions for competitive categories from slum-based filmmakers and films about slum-issues, while hand-picking non-competitive films for their feature lengths and entertainment value. In competitive categories, films would be solicited from local slum-based filmmakers. In the non-competitive categories, however, the festival organisers would be able to individually curate which films were to be part of their 'slum' vision.

A call for submissions in the SFF's competitive categories went out in early July 2013 through a network of producers working in and around informal settlements, and drawn from amongst professional contacts held by both Hot Sun and Slum-TV. This inter-media NGO network precipitated, somewhat predictably, a large number of submissions by NGOs and other development-related groups with films that focused on issue-based stories. This included groups like the Mwelu Foundation and FilmAid International, as well as submissions from previous graduates from the Kibera Film School who had gone on to setup their own production groups in the city. In addition to solicited films, there were internal submissions from both Hot Sun and Slum-TV. However it had been agreed, on the insistence of Slum-TV following the saturation of the SFF 2012 with Hot Sun films, that facilitating partners would be limited to a maximum of three submissions per category.[69] Down a separate branch of the solicitation network, sponsor World Friend had forwarded the call for submissions to their partners, which resulted in a series of submissions of 'citizen journalism' productions funded by medical organisation AMREF,[70] and a submission from The APHRC,[71] USIAID-funded *A Story of the Urban Poor* (2013), which went on to win 'Best Documentary'.

There was only one sign that this fairly limited network of media NGOs with direct links to facilitating organisations or funders had been broken. Two submissions were made from Nigeria, including *Young Smoker* (2011), which won 'Best Narrative Film', in an unclear link

[69] This was initially not received well by Hot Sun, who argued that they would be disenfranchising their own students by preventing them from submitting to a local film festival. However this was later settled when Olivieri argued that the festival needed to generate a broader coverage of films.

[70] Amref Health Africa (formerly the 'African Medical and Research Foundation'), which was initially set up as the 'Flying Doctors of East Africa' to provide medical services to remote regions of East Africa.

[71] The African Population and Health Research Centre.

by which filmmakers were forwarded the SFF call for submission from a contact who in turn had it forwarded to them. A further submission, *Our Girls* (2012), was put forward by NGO Equality Now,[72] which it seemed had also been reached through a forwarding of the call for submissions. However the majority of films in the category of competitive submissions had a direct link to some party within the festival organisation, suggesting that the reach of the festival's network was in fact still relatively limited.

One significant reason for this lies in the practices through which solicitation and submission were undertaken. The call for submissions was circulated by email amongst a limited set of 90 contacts, drawn from a mailing list created for the SFF 2012 from professional contacts at Hot Sun and Slum-TV, and its re-circulation relied on the forwarding of emails. Indicative data aggregated by the mailing list service used, MailChimp, suggests that the email was successfully delivered to and opened by 69 of these original recipients, and was opened 224 times by contacts to whom the email was then forwarded on. However, despite this relative increase in network size through the use of email forwarding, the majority of film submissions were not submitted online, but were rather delivered as DVDs in person at the Slum-TV or Hot Sun offices. The reasons for this seemed to be largely *material* in nature. Digital audiovisual files are large, and the mobile dongle based internet that many informal settlements rely on for an internet connection charge by the megabyte. Sending even a short audiovisual production in this way would represent a significant investment for a slum-based filmmaker. Buying a VCD, and even hopping on a local bus, would have been significantly cheaper. As such, despite the potential reach of an online call, most submissions came from filmmakers local to the Nairobi area, and often familiar with one of the festival's facilitators.

This material limitation highlights a central problem with Olivieri's ambition for a global slum film festival. While digital technology might arguably facilitate the diminishment of the geographical distance implied in a 'global' event, covering this diminished distance can still be prohibitively expensive. Thus, while Olivieri's professional style might have driven the

[72] Equality Now is an international campaign organisation focused on the human rights of women and girls.

SFF to reach out to filmmakers beyond Nairobi – indeed, while his vision was in an important sense contingent upon the SFF's ability to do so – this ambition was not coupled with an offering of any economic support to help slum-based filmmakers to (digitally speaking) make the journey.

The Rule and the Hustle: rethinking social action in the SFF

The account given so far of the SFF has sought to present a narrative of how the event was formalised – and networked – throughout the preparation of its 2013 edition. The intention of this account has been to offer some insight into how the event's practices reflect certain tensions between the different professional styles at work amongst its facilitators. A central insight that has emerged through this research is the complex double operation of slum-based filmmakers as both the beneficiaries *and* agents of a kind of 'cultural development'. One of the central goals of the SFF project has been to encourage the telling of slum stories by slum-based filmmakers. However, in parallel to this the event hopes to support and empower young professional filmmakers: that is to say, one of its core developmental ambitions is to 'develop professionalism' amongst filmmakers working and living within slums. In a very important sense therefore, the SFF wants to both have its cake, and eat it; it wants to promote slum stories, while simultaneously promoting the escape of storytellers from slums. One result of this duality is the confused suggestion that a filmmaker might *work* his or her way out of poverty, by making films *about* poverty.

Quite problematically, while the SFF invites its participant filmmakers to dream and aspire toward professional careers, it does not actually give them the economic means by which to do so. Furthermore, as a study of the practices of establishing and supporting the SFF reveal, the people that do profit from a form of professional empowerment are not the beneficiaries of development, but rather other development professionals. This can be seen in how World Friends directly profits from a relationship to Mathare, opening up a new market of subjects for its medical services; in Olivieri's professional gains as a cultural operator building a global SFF brand; my own benefit as a researcher who profits directly

from being able to demonstrate a portfolio of interesting projects, or whose professional relations – with CISP for example – are empowered by my being able offer World Friends *access* to Mathare.

Yet while this pessimistic vision of the SFF emerges from the study of the economic disenfranchisement of its slum-based participants, it only gives one view of the story. If taken as the *only* story the SFF can tell, this above narrative risks recreating a reductive account of "Africa as the victim of global processes imposed by external economic forces" (Locatelli & Nugent 2009: 3). As has also been seen through the SFF, there has been a distinctive capacity amongst participants in the SFF to negotiate and mediate the deterministic articulations of 'development' and its 'programmes'. What has emerged over my year and half long engagement with the SFF has been – in different forms – the recurrent tension between the plans and intentions of the festival, and the disruptive messiness of their enactment. Before advancing an explorative theorisation of social action that will serve as a conclusion to these reflections on the SFF, I would first like to take a brief detour through the SFF 2013's actual screening event, in which we will see the operation of 'formalisation' brought to bear in one final and yet revealing way.

Formalisation and Carnival in the Screened Event

The screenings of the SFF 2013 started on 2 September 2013, and as in the preceding year, were launched simultaneously at Kamukunji and Mabatini. As the screens[73] were slowly erected a crowd shifted around the screening area, gathering and dispersing as preparation got underway. Entertainment then started, punctually just as the sun was dipping. In Mathare, this entertainment was almost entirely performed by musicians, local contacts of members of Slum-TV and performers known in the Mathare area. In Kibera performances were more varied, covering musical acts, elaborate circus/dance routines, and stand up comedians. In distinction to SFF 2012, the entertainment sections of the SFF 2013 had been more carefully planned. In 2012, a single MC was responsible for most of

[73] Due to issues with the screen borrowed from FilmAid for SFF 2012, which was difficult to inflate and prone to punctures, Slum-TV rented a screen, projector and generator from a media production company local to Eastlands for their Mathare event.

the entertainment in Mathare, working to excite the crowd by singing, and inviting children before the screen for dance competitions. In 2013 a varied range of artists had been booked in advance, and entertainers were even given their own special slot on the festival programme. The function of the entertainers remained the same, however. As the sun set and the sky became dark enough for the outdoor screenings to start, the entertainment drew a crowd, while allowing projectionists to keep hold of their audience as they figured out the final technical aspects of getting the screenings ready.

It was only once the screenings themselves had started that the most significant distinction between the SFF 2012 and SFF 2013 became evident. Each day's film screenings had been combined into 'Packets' – physically grouped VCDs – that were organised according to the programme's agreed sequence of films. Olivieri also very carefully checked that the right films were screened each day, often rushing between Kibera and Mathare so as to cover both locations. For Olivieri, this was an important part of the process of making sure that each screening held to its approved schedule, such as to prevent the high variations between scheduled film and screened film that was observed in 2012. As Olivieri commented, in a professional international festival it is expected to actually show the films that you schedule and award. His reference to professionalism here was his own experience working in the Córdoba film festival, and his recent visit to the Durban International festival. We can see in Olivieri's desire to 'formalise' the SFF an expression of his own professional judgements about what constitutes an effective, and successful, film festival.

In this sense, the SFF was formalised into a tightly scheduled, planned, and carefully orchestrated 'cultural event' modelled against an idea of what a successful film festival *should* be. However, this process of formalisation of the SFF screening events came at the cost of the fleeting control that its spectators were able to assert over the screenings in 2012. During the SFF 2012, the schedule of screenings was broadly disregarded. In a moment reflected upon in an earlier chapter, projectionist Idha Nancy, panicking as the audiences began to leave Mabatini, had started screening entertaining films and

animations in order to better hold the attention of spectators. In a related sense, the Kibera screenings regularly repeated the same films, to the exclusion of scheduled films – films perceived by projectionists as more popular amongst their viewers. In this sense, the spectators, although dispersed and un-unified, were able to exert a kind of discursive pressure on projectionists who took advantage of the lack of strict projecting processes, resulting in strong deviations from the SFF's screening schedules.

One way of thinking about these earlier moments during the SFF 2012 might be to abandon any assumption that the event's participants were attending a 'festival', and instead think about the event in relation to a concept of the 'carnivalesque'. This term of the carnivalesque draws from the work of Russian linguistic philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, and is often associated to his critique of French renaissance writer François Rabelais (Bakhtin 1984). In the 'carnivalesque' Bakhtin indicates the range of techniques, such as grotesque deformation, satire and parodic doubling, humour and laughter, at work in Rabelais's fiction that give communities the ability to 'decrown' political elites of medieval France. However, within Bakhtin's work itself there is an important – and useful – division in what he himself means by the term 'carnival'. In their comprehensive and nuanced work on Bakhtin, Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson (1990) further an understanding of Bakhtin's 'carnivalesque' by drawing out two different modes in which Bakhtin used the term, which they distinguish as the "humanistic" and the "antihumanistic" carnival (1990: 441). The humanistic carnival is demonstrated in Bakhtin's earlier work, *Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse*, in which he develops a restrained concept of the carnival and the parodic laughter that it induces as the positivistic critique of particular manifestations of power. Such a 'humanistic' carnival seeks to induce laughter as a way of producing 'outside' perspectives in contexts of political domination so as to "increase our freedom of interpretive choice by providing new perspectives" (Morson & Emerson 1990: 435). However, in Bakhtin's later work in *Rabalaise and His World* (1984) – the work most often cited in relation to his theory of the 'carnivalesque' – Morson and Emerson note a distinct 'antihumanistic' shift in Bakhtin's theory, in which the carnival is seen to seek the total and

radical rejection of all power: “laughter under these conditions *merely* decrowns, and any finished image is portrayed as repressive” (1990: 440-441).

Given this distinction, it is the first – the ‘humanistic’ – sense of the carnivalesque that I wish to invoke here in relation to the SFF; the sense that ‘decrowns’, but then allows new political realities to emerge. Importantly, while Bakhtin’s carnival focuses around the liberating role of laughter and parody, transposed into the context of the SFF our focus is less on laughter, and turns instead to the *refusal to take seriously* the careful plans and narratives of development. Through the rejection of the screening, through the actions of turning their backs and walking away, yelling and sighing at the screen, or cheering and clapping when something agreeable was shown, the spectators were able to reject the total domination of the event by a schedule designed by its facilitators and partners, and facilitate – in part, and indirectly, through the projectionist’s *interpretation* of the feelings of the event's spectators – the dethroning of the developmental narratives which operated through the discursive field of the festival’s organisation.

Seen in this way, the formalisation of the SFF 2013 screening events might be taken as part of a translation of a ‘carnival’ into a ‘festival’, moving from a chaotic re-appropriation of the screening by interpretations of audience opinion, toward the production of the appropriate subjectivity of spectators as required by the ‘serious’ developmental work of the SFF. In this sense, the dynamics of the formalisation of screenings started to increasingly formalise the SFF’s operative role within its beneficiary communities. During the SFF 2013 events, this could be seen through the projectionist’s now rigid disregard for spectator feelings. For example, during a screening of *Mossammat Zahanara* (2012) in Mathare, a Bangladeshi social documentary about a slum in Dhaka with English subtitles, almost all spectators had left Mabatini by the time of the film's end. As Omondi explained, most people simply couldn’t read the subtitles. However the film was left to play unabated. Unlike during the SFF 2012, popular films were also only screened once, and at their allotted time. This was despite the temptation of Roy Okelo at Kamujunji to put on the popular *Nairobi Half Life* (2012) when their copy of *The Good Man* (2012) went missing. Instead Olivieri

jumped in a taxi, in the middle of Nairobi afternoon rush hour, and raced across town from Mathare to deliver a copy in person. In seeking to empower communities of Kibera and Mathare through film, the SFF had managed to disempower them as film-viewers. People could of course still walk away, sigh, groan, clap, or cheer, however under the auspices of 'professional' film formalisation in 2013, such things would have no direct effect on the films that were actually screened.

Parody, Social Action, and the Situation of Duress

The festival as a socially and geographically situated event might be thought of in terms of conflictual moments of 'carnivalesque' rejection, and obstinate 'formalisation' of the festival's social and political function. The process of the formalisation of the SFF between 2012 to 2013 helps to define, in this sense, some of the political turbulences and relational undercurrents than delineate a 'film festival', whose life exceeds any given year, and whose practices are constantly under revisitation and review. Taking up an idea of the 'carnival' helps to reveal some of the political functions of 'formalisation'.

The professionalism of the SFF was established, primarily through Olivieri's actions, by its adherence to a set of established rules and proper processes. And as the 2013 edition demonstrated, such rules require constant reinforcement. While reflecting on the work of Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau proposes a relation between parody and his theories of social practice which might prove revealing here:

> [I]f a parodic performance means the creation of a distance between the action actually being performed and the rule being enacted, and if the instance of application of the rule is internal to the rule itself, parody is constitutive of any social action. … In actual fact, *any* political action … has a parodic component, as far as a certain meaning which was fixated within the horizon of an assemblage of institutionalized practices is displaced toward new uses which subvert its literality.
>
> Laclau 2000: 78

Laclau here advances a theory of parody, following from Butler, in which parody is not limited to a definition of something "playful" (2000: 78), but is rather thought of as the creation of difference between *a rule*, and its *enactment*. Within the SFF, then, we might see a similar process at work, by which the rule of the event is persistently matched by the

deviation and violation of that rule when enacted. The carnival of the crowd, in this sense, is the parodic rejection of the rule of the formal event; the formality of the professional is marked out as the triumph of the rule of law. However, while we may have started here with the formalisation of the SFF 2013 screenings, we need not limit this reflection to the carnivalesque of the crowd. Does such parody not show itself in Omondi's 'hustling' within the project's economy, and the broader and turbulent, conflictual and energising relations that the SFF has been seen to have amongst its facilitators that goes *beyond* its designation as a simple 'developmental' project? Laclau's idea of parody bears a striking resemblance to Joyce Nyario's reflection of 'jua kali' as a form of "mimicry" as part of a modification of "imported styles" that drives the "cultural energy in Africa" (2007: 148). In a similar sense, while there might remain a strong critique here of the economic disarticulation and disempowerment of development subjects within the logic of their own development, the question of social and political action in the SFF is not reducible to strategies of simply overcoming these dynamics. Rather, our attention might be turned to that "artisan who strives on the margins of the structured economy in a culture of transgression" (Nyairo 2007: 147) – of the professional development 'hustler' who, rather than seeking out development in development's own terms, re-appropriates development assets for 'new uses' through which he or she might "subvert the literality" (Laclau 2000: 78) of development's fixated meanings.

This chapter set out with the task of thinking about professionalism in the context of development. In doing so, I proposed a theory of professionalism as an enacted, performative style. Drawing from Ferguson's work on urban communities in the Zambian Copperbelt (1999), this style was seen to be not entirely a question of 'free choice'. Rather, as Ferguson points out, urban style is enacted under a 'situation of duress'; that is to say, within certain conditions in which the *need* for a style becomes a question not of taste, but of survival. However, in looking back on this chapter, I see now that I started with a false assumption. In my considerations of the professional styles of the SFF, I had assumed that the 'situation of duress' within which such styles were enacted was life in the slums itself. It was in relation to the struggles to escape the 'slum' that different professional imaginaries

and ambitions were thought to operate. However, it seems that the 'situation of duress' of professional style was in fact not conditions of life in the slum, but rather the totalising logic of development itself, within which the slum is precisely articulated as a place of duress. The mediation of social and political action through the SFF might be productively thought of, therefore, as the vying and parodic *jua kali*-like re-appropriation of that "instinctive capacity to appropriate and rework whatever resources are available" (Nyairo 2007: 147). Seen in this way, the SFF is no longer seen as either a 'film festival' or a 'development project'. Rather, it is a single and temporary *opportunity*, nestled within a far broader field social and political relations, and professional, hustler styles.

Being Hustled: the collapse of a practice-based approach

Across my experience over two editions of the SFF, my position within the group had shifted considerably. I had gone from an observer to what Omondi mockingly called an 'mzito' – a boss, throwing his influence and money around. This became most pronounced in my success at raising funds for the event, through which I went from being a participant in the event, to being one of the main reasons everybody got paid. And yet this transition was never part of any plan, and certainly did not come about through my own choice. As my proximity to the project diminished, my clear location within its structuring logic emerged more fully. While my research had been driven forward by a desire to establish an understanding of the lives of people working in an interesting cultural development project in Mathare and Kibera, my own placement within this project graduated toward one of authority. My mind returns here to the description that opened this chapter, of my retreat from the insecurity of sitting alone on a street in Mathare by turning to the relatively safety of the 'professional' space of the Slum-TV office. What was at work here, more than just an expression of my own trepidation, was a more general epistemological retreat from understanding the lives of people living and working in Mathare, concealing myself behind the safe veneer of my own style as a legitimised professional, rather than an illegitimate or out-of-place human being.

This retreat within my practice-based approach was demonstrated most clearly during a final interview with Collins Omondi, on one of my last days in Nairobi. Meeting over lunch in the food court of the Sarit shopping centre, we spoke briefly about our impressions of the SFF and our respective future plans. I then turned to ask him something that I felt I already partly knew the answer to, but wanted to clarify: why is it, did he think, that young people in Mathare wanted to get involved in making film and working on projects like the SFF? Omondi's answer was simply, and unequivocally, that people in Mathare wanted to make their neighbourhood better. I was surprised. Over the year Omondi had been constantly arguing about the self-interest and in-fighting within the SFF; we had worked together on a film festival event that had the very best of intentions, yet which often didn't seem to make much sense, and he had always been the first to raise the issue of the hustle of making money in Mathare. I suggested to Omondi that I had personally thought that making NGO film was more to do with 'hustling', with the opportunities of finding funding and making a little money – yet he flatly denied me that line of thinking. People make film because they wanted to make Mathare a better place to live.

Thinking back on the exchange, I see now that I was being hustled. Omondi was, I suspect, mimicking what he thought I wanted to hear, presenting himself in the terms of his anticipation of my expectations: what Bakhtin has called the 'double-voiced discourse'. Initially frustrating, the encounter drove home the significance of my own transformation from a participant into an 'mzito'. While I would consider us friends, and at the very least capable of casual and generally unguarded conversation, a part of me had come to represent to Omondi the possibility of future opportunity and professional empowerment. I had become another European agent of development, and a source of access to Nairobi's privileged networks of development funding.

This encounter serves as a vital and humbling reminder, at the end my research, of the deep limits of a practice-based approach. I had started this research with an idealised version of my own agency in mind. All I needed, I had convinced myself, was proximity and a critical mind. However, as my time with the SFF reveals, rather than just going out into

the world and *practising*, I myself am just as capable of *being practised*. My own subjectivity is not a matter of research design. Doing practice-based research, we could say, brings with it its own ‘situation of duress’. And as Ferguson reminds us, the styles we enact in response are not entirely of our own choosing.

Chapter 7

Articulating Urbanity in Nairobi: pauses… continuations…

This thesis presents a novel approach to understanding how the development and aid sectors relate to and effect media production in Nairobi. It places particular focus on the interpersonal nature of all media production, and the messiness and situated complexity through which meaning is produced in Nairobi's urban media environment. The starting hypothesis being explored through this work was the notion that development and NGO funding has a strong influence over audiovisual storytelling in the city. Having approached this hypothesis through a practice-based ethnography of media production, its assumptions have been largely overturned. While we can certainly say – to borrow a term from Nick Couldry's description of media practices (2010) – that many of Nairobi's processes of media production are "anchored" in related processes for international development, this statement in-and-of itself tells us very little about the social and cultural meanings that might emerge from this arrangement. What this thesis has revealed is that it is only when we turn to consider the practices of media production in more situated detail, that we might begin to establish a new critical grammar for engaging with the range of practices through which producers, writers, directors and funders mediate, imagine, position, disagree about, and re-invent their understandings of social and economic development.

This research offers a strong critique of the developmental treatment of media technologies as uncomplicated tools for achieving social and economic change. It has revealed that when seen from the perspective of a practice-based ethnographic approach, the media products that emerge from moments of the culturalisation of development can be seen to be determined as much from 'below' as they are from 'above'. Furthermore, key concepts

such as culture, community, and development are disrupted and contested through the very practices of media production themselves. This thesis has provided a critical examination of these dynamics, drawing our attention to the multitude of ways that the ideas, and economic capital, of development are taken-up, rearticulated, transformed and repurposed by media practitioners working with development funding.

The notion of the culturalisation of development put forth here seeks to signify those discursive moments within the framework of a development project in which various agents turn toward articulating 'culture' as a way to further particular developmental goals. It takes as its object of study those instances in which people seek to 'culturalise' development work, and the results – as this thesis has traced out across the two examples of Wazi and the SFF – can be highly contingent and largely unpredictable. The culturalisation of development demonstrated in the production of Wazi saw the production become a contested discursive site in which concepts of ethics, community, development, human rights, migration, and notions of nationalism and national security, were brought together – at times antagonistically – with ideas about the power of cultural production. The production was profoundly altered from its original design, co-oped and repurposed by the creative ambitions and personal tastes of its producers. In a very different example, the study of the culturalisation of development embodied by the SFF revealed how the offices and screening locations of the festival became sites for diverging professional styles and ambitions amongst its various participants. While the festival founder sought to formalise the event into a 'successful' and international film festival, its other participants repurposed the festival's assets within the framework of their own professional styles and personal values. While involving less explicit verbal disagreement between participants than was experienced during Wazi, the practices of the SFF nevertheless housed deep antagonisms over questions of the developmental purpose of film, ideas of community activism, and the social and professional value of the festival amongst its funders, facilitators, and participants. While very different projects, Wazi and the SFF present two sites in which culture becomes articulated within development discourse. The resulting antagonisms of

each case lend rich narrative detail to our account of the turbulent intersection of media production and the development field in urban Nairobi.

Drawing out these carefully situated narratives, this thesis has offered one tentative 'approach' toward Nairobi's media environment. While cautious and – as I will elaborate upon presently – certainly flawed, this approach has been politically and epistemologically divisive, attempting to frame questions of media, culture and development within a sceptical theoretical horizon that has been generally under-explored within research at the nexus of media studies and development theory. I would briefly like to outline some of the implications of the kind of approach that I have offered, following through some of the more troubling questions it has left me with, while tracing out the contours of its weaknesses and limitations. Finally, I will turn to consider some of the particular openings that this approach might offer for future research in the field. In doing so, I will generally organise these concluding remarks around two driving questions. First, at the close of this analysis, what is it that I think I now know? And secondly, looking back and knowing what I now know, what would I have done differently?

Toward a Sceptical Critique of Development

> This counter-history … It reveals that the light—the famous dazzling effect of power—is not something that petrifies, solidifies, and immobilizes the entire social body, and thus keeps it in order; it is in fact a divisive light that illuminates one side of the social body but leaves the other side in shadow or casts it into darkness.
>
> – Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* (2003): 70

This thesis has sought to contribute toward, in Foucault's terms, a counter-history of development in urban Nairobi. This counter-history has been expressed here in distinction to accounts that present development as the exclusive working of Western power, as a "deceitful, manipulative, modern form of colonialism" (Rahnema 1986: 43). While this polarising sentiment, encapsulated in what Aram Ziai terms 'neopopulist post-development' (2004), has offered a pertinent political critique of international development's occidental hubris, is this really a sufficient basis for formulating a study of how development initiatives operate within and amongst the lives of people in urban Africa today? This is not

to deny that development programmes working at the level of politico-economic infrastructure, orchestrated through organisms such as the IMF or the World Bank, might well be saturated with the political interests of Western elites. It simply highlights that, when seen not from the heights of political economy but taken up instead in terms of the everyday social interaction of human beings, the articulation of 'development' and its concomitant ethical, political and economic concepts becomes significantly more complicated.

This critical position toward development theory is strongly aligned with critiques that have pointed out how the post-development moment relied too heavily upon a retreat to a poorly grounded theory of 'discourse', coupled by an often superficial invocation of Foucault (cf. Pieterse 2000; Brigg 2002; Ziai 2004, 2007). As Ziai astutely puts it, the idea of discourse that much post-development theory espouses is in fact a form of objectivist ideological critique that seems distinctly un-Foucauldian (2004: 1047). As a response, I have sought to engage more carefully with a theory of discourse, grounded in post-Marxism, as a way of contributing to a more sceptical and cautious branch of post-development thinking.

Yet there stands a second critique of post-development with which this thesis is not so closely aligned: the idea that criticisms of development have failed to pose realistic, actionable *alternatives to development* (cf. Pieterse 2000; Storey 2000; McKinnon 2007). Working in the context of the post-Cold War collapse of international development's moral and political authority, this position has led to the hopeful defence of international development as a problematic and flawed, yet vital project in the alleviation of global suffering (cf. Harrison 2003; Ufford & Giri 2003; McKinnon 2007; Clammer 2012). However, in treating development as a discourse, rather than a set of ideological absolutes, this urge for an 'alternative' seems somewhat less relevant. Instead, our attention is turned toward the need for more cautious and situated accounts of how ideas about development are articulated through human practices, within a broader field of social and political relations that constitute contemporary human life.

To phrase this point with Foucault and Laclau's respective critical imagery, the dazzling effect of the authoritative articulations through which a discourse of development has become totalised within our contemporary moment has cast into shadow and obscurity many other narratives about the values of human life. In the present case, this has been explored in relation to the developmental narratives of modernity in Nairobi. This counter-history has emerged here, therefore, not from the desire to redefine a new 'development in general' – as neoliberal, or neocolonial, or post-Marxist or what have you – but rather from the subversion of development's totalising logic by placing it in relation to other discursive fields of social and political action in Nairobi. In the current case, this has been explored in terms of 'culturalisation'; or rather, the creative, productive processes for 'making culture', and the taking up of culture as the site for the expression of the 'ideas of development'. In this way, the intention here has been to advance a different style of thinking about the imbrication of media production and development discourse. In doing so, this thesis offers an arrangement of 'media' and 'development' that turns away from technologically-deterministic studies of how media can be used for development, and focuses instead on the study of development as a *mediated* discourse.

These theoretical interests have been brought to bear through the application of a practice-based methodological approach. This approach, complemented by interviews and textual and literature analysis, allowed me to establish – through strategies such as participation and re-enactment – a greater proximity to the field of discursive relations that occupy the central interest of this thesis. Drawing on Ernesto Laclau's critical nomenclature, I have elaborated an understanding of 'articulatory practice', conceptualised as part of the theorisation of 'the social' as a discursive field inherently open to transformation. By taking up such a definition, this study has not sought to reveal what the 'practices' of development are in any objective or ritualistic sense; rather, it has sought to engage with the various different ways that ideas about culture and development in urban Nairobi are articulated *through* the practices of media producers.

By taking on work as a media practitioner myself within this articulatory field, I have sought to join in with these practices. As such, this approach rejects any neat or privileged distinction between ‘researcher’ and ‘object of study’. My own practices of researching, writing, participating, and re-enacting are therefore foregrounded within my own reflections. Rather than the rigorous construction of an account of practices as ritualistic, knowable, or as inherent features of underlying social structures, this approach – both theoretically and methodologically – has therefore taken a more narrative position. It has sought to tell a story – within which my own interests and work played a central part – about a small group of media professionals, negotiating and mediating ideas about culture, society and development in urban Nairobi.

Situated Global Impressions: Thinking through Wazi and the SFF

How useful has this practice-based, post-Marxist inflected approach been in exploring Nairobi's media environment? My accounts of the production of *Wazi?FM* (2014) and the two-year evolution of the Slum Film Festival are in many ways quite difficult to hold together in a single summary thought. In helping to write Wazi, my work brought me into contact with the various ways that ideas about community, friendship, and human migration are expressed through an audiovisual production, corollaries to the intense human conflicts that demarcate the lives of urban refugees in Nairobi. As it emerged, these ideas were not absolutist responses to any ideological certainty – that is to say, they were not expressions symptomatic of some unequivocal developmental mandate – but were instead articulated in relation to changing impressions of the world and its ethical and political crises, held by different practitioners at different times, and expressed in very different ways. These resulted in what I have called a human/culture antagonism, a turbulent discursive frontier at which ideas of humanist ethics, political policy, national identity, and notions of creativity and ‘artistic quality’, were wrought, contested, and rewritten.

The terrorist attack on the Westgate shopping centre, which took place only days before shooting for Wazi was scheduled to start, cast this antagonism into sharper relief. Westgate

forced the insular relations of Wazi's production environment into confrontation with ideas of the project's 'global' significance. Quite unexpectedly, Wazi's thematic interests – of xenophobia and the social integration of urban refugees in Nairobi – became the centrepiece of contemporary Kenyan politics at the time. The film's producers, all of whom lived and worked near Westgate, suddenly had their project recast with an urgent personal relevance. And yet, most remarkably, what followed the 'discursive crisis' of Westgate was a lack of substantial change to the Wazi script itself. The story of Wazi had, in a sense, anticipated Westgate, marking a deep conservatism within the project's outward veneer of community activism. This radical inconsequence of the lives Somalis in Nairobi highlighted how the production of Wazi was, in practice, a *mediation* of the meanings of Somali life by a group of European producers, and on behalf of European funders. Notably, this mediation could be seen to be taking place in parallel to the mediations of complex concepts such as national identity and security, human migration, civil rights, the features of shared humanity, and so forth. The resulting film, rather than a linear result of a strong developmental mandate, bears the marks of its conflictual and antagonistic production.

During the Slum Film Festival there was a decidedly similar dispersion of development's grand narratives at play. Yet the event's antagonisms took on a very different form to those seen during Wazi. The SFF's original funding came from a mandate for 'cultural development', under the guidance of the Spanish Embassy's Cultural Attaché. The project's official ambitions were to both *use culture* for development (to use film as a way of addressing the issues of living in an informal settlement) and to *develop a culture* (to support filmmakers and germinate a tradition of film viewing in the informal settlements). Yet the vying professionalisms, ambitions and aspirations of people involved with the festival reconstituted the event's identity at the crossroads of conversations on political activism, audiovisual production, professional aspirations, and issues of urban space in Nairobi.

The SFF had sought to 'articulate' and give voice to slum filmmakers and slum communities; what became apparent in practice was that these communities of people

were already articulating, through preexisting professional styles, filmic tastes, political and moral in/tolerances, and so forth. As Laclau points out, "a strict enactment of a rule via an institutionalized performance is ultimately impossible. The application of a rule already involves its own subversion" (2000: 77). In seeking the application of its 'rule' – of the SFF's idealised activist mandate – the project was quickly struck by the fact that its beneficiary communities of Mathare and Kibera refused to be the kinds of subjects that the festival wanted. Amongst the aspirations of young professional filmmakers, the panic of the projectionist, the globalising ambitions of the festival's founder and funders, the easily-bored spectators, the passive and recipient subjects of 'cultural development' were nowhere to be found.

While very different projects, both Wazi and the SFF demonstrate two fascinating ways that development is taken up by different kinds of media professionals as a financial opportunity for self-promotion. On both occasions, albeit in very different ways, media practitioners took up funding with a 'developmental' purpose and sought to make it work for their own, parallel interests. As AbdouMaliq Simone writes in his introduction to *Urban Africa* (2005):

> Urban Africans have long made lives that have worked. There has been an astute capacity to use thickening fields of social relations, however disordered they may be, to make city life bearable.
>
> Simone 2005: 1

As my study has shown, this is true not only of urban Africans, but seems just as applicable to a far wider range of economic migrants to urban Africa who, taking up in this case development funding, work with and transform its localised discursive meanings. Such an account presents a view of development that is radically different from its more familiar depiction as either a globally-distributed set of ethical, economic or political idealisations; or as the ugly face of contemporary politico-economic manipulation by the West. Instead, there is a very strong sense in both Wazi and the SFF that 'development' itself is besides the point; rather, what we are confronted with is an environment where ideas about development are enveloped within productive practices of transforming the intentions behind development funding. In this sense, development's key discursive moments were re-articulated in relation to other situated circumstances and practices. Thus, while

development might be understood as a vital *material* precondition for the existence of both projects (after all, neither CVF nor Olivieri could have established their respective projects without privileged access to European cooperation development funding networks), it is not a sufficient precondition for either discursive arrangement.

Brought into conversation, these accounts of Wazi and the SFF hope to contribute some small part to the ongoing story of Nairobi. As has been pointed out by Simone (2004, 2005), Locatelli and Nugent (2009) and Myers (2011), among others, modernity in much of urban Africa is too often articulated in the relatively singular terms of linear economic growth and political development as a member of a global community. And yet Nairobi has increasingly started to attract critical attention for its 'fragmented' character (Rodriguez-Torres & Charton-Bigot 2010) with a complex and interwoven biographies (Granqvist 2004). Urban life is 'ordinary', as geographer Jennifer Robinson defines it, as the ordinariness of situated experience in distinction to the grand urban categories of 'European', 'African' or 'Western' (2006). Amongst a development discourse so preoccupied with 'specialness' – of special suffering, special communities, special subjects – this thesis might be seen as contributing to an 'ordinary resistance' within narratives of life Nairobi; a resistance to the domination of the city by unitary narratives of its teleological modernist development.

A Practice-based Approach: Pauses and Continuations

> [Noise] has its social logic – a logic that makes itself visible only if one is able at some point to set aside the search of signal, and to maintain a decent respect for the social significance of the unintelligible, for the fact that signs may produce puzzlement, unease, and uncertainty (and not only for the ethnographer) just as easily as they may produce stable and unequivocal meanings.
>
> – James Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity* (1999): 210

At the close of this research, and having spent so much time 'looking back' at my experiences and trying to establish a narrative amongst my findings, I find myself asking a slightly strange question: after all this engagement with sceptical theory, what do I mean by 'actuality'? The answer, as it appears to me now, is that 'actuality' means 'in practice'. So what, then, is practice? Looking back over this research, I have the sense of a slightly more refined answer than that with which I started: Practice is discursive articulation, within material limits. Hobart, in the conclusion of his work in *After Culture*, signals something

similar when he writes that “any act of articulation takes place under specific material conditions” (2000: 242). This may seem somewhat self-evident, however theories of discourse that traditionally focus on exchanges in language and ideas, tend to make invisible the world – or ‘actuality’ – in which these exchanges take place. Turning to consider practices therefore serves, in this sense, the useful function of insisting on the recognition of their material conditions of possibility.

If this thesis contributes anything to the conversation set forth by Bräuchler and Postill (2010) for practices as a new paradigm in media research, it might be as an example of a study that has taken up a radical definition of articulatory practice, and then tried to make it work in the field. This approach has proved illuminating as a strategy for studying the ways that articulated meanings are negotiated by different people, and in different ways, within an environment in which there presides an often overwhelming sense of what everything ‘means’ – specifically, within the discursive environment of development.

In order to advance such a method, I have proposed thinking in terms of the four qualities of proximity, re-enactment, difference, and dialogue. These are not presented here as the four poles of any total theory of practice, but are rather put forth as four general aspects which have helped me think through my own practice-based work. Within my own approach, I sought out a position of proximity with the discourses I wanted to study, seeking to re-enact the articulatory practices of others as a way of developing a proximal appreciation of how these discourses operate. However, such an approach foregrounds my own difference to and within such discourses – my re-enactment is, by necessity, incomplete and inaccurate. Yet this difference – this critical outsidedness – is precisely that which produces the condition in which I might reflect on the changing, dialogical nature of the ideas articulated within a discursive totality. That is to say, it was precisely my alienation within both Wazi and the SFF that allowed me to approach the projects with any quality of proximity, yet without losing the ability to *see* the projects, and reflect upon them. Inversely, it was precisely my lack of alienation, the sudden firmness of my location within the

discursive logic of the project, that pulled the wheels off my practice-based engagement with the SFF.

This approach therefore vitally foregrounds my own positionality *within* my research, drawing out my own relational entanglement within the very things I sought to study. While such a practice-based approach has proven illuminating, it is also therefore very limited. As my experiences with the SFF demonstrated, while I set out on a practice-based research approach, I eventually became *practised* by my field of study itself. My racial, class-based and professional identity within Nairobi's development discourse elevated me to a position of authority within projects – what I have explored here as the troubling process of 'becoming mzito' – and began to strongly limit the kinds of practices I was able to 're-enact'. The choice of how to practise through research was, as it turned out, not entirely my own.

Furthermore, this practice-based approach, while quite effective in establishing close and situated accounts, has struggled to address issues that require a broader critical perspective. As Ferguson points out at the start of his collection of essays *Global Shadows*, while anthropological studies of all the multitude of different concepts of Africa and African life might be admirably disciplined, they are decidable poor at addressing the fact that the world is "full of talk" of Africa in general (2006: 1). In a similar sense, this close study of two projects working at the nexus of media and development does not easily generalise into an effective response to a world full of talk about development. There are several central blind spots in this research that have emerged, in my own opinion, precisely because this particular study lends itself poorly to more general critiques.

One of these blind spots, and one that had bothered me throughout my writing, is gender. Throughout the Wazi project in particular, I was conscious of the gendered dynamics at play between myself, Vincenzo Cavallo, JC Niala and Alessandra Argenti. Particularly at moments of conflict between Niala and Cavallo, I wondered at the engendering of Cavallo's aggressive political activism, and Niala's more gentle appreciation of social community dynamics. However I hesitated to introduce such thinking, as it would have required me to

'treat' either Niala or Cavallo as subjects of larger categories for which I failed to find sufficient basis. Was Niala's work as a writer somehow symptomatic of her subjectivity as a woman within Kenyan society? Was Cavallo's 'hard' politics phallic? While there was certainly a sense that a theoretically and methodologically thorough study of the gendered dynamics of development was needed, it seemed beyond the grasp of my current study to approach with sufficient caution or rigour.

A second significant blind spot of this research has been the broader political economic concerns that have traditionally occupied critiques of development studies, in particular the issues of the latent 'neoliberalism' of international economic development. While the analysis of the SFF opened itself to questions of economics through a study of professional style, I avoided direct theorisation through the lens of neoliberal theory. The reason for this was that, for the most part, neoliberalism has been critiqued in development from the perspective of economic infrastructure and policy making at a national level (cf. Ferguson 1994; Escobar 1995). Within this highly particularised study of the SFF, it became difficult to see how to bring such theories down to the level of individual and local community action without trivially equating neoliberalism – with its highly specific implication of historical relations between the state and private sector – into a loose equivalence with ideas about 'personal profit'. For the sake of my present analysis, I have sufficed myself with the language of 'hustling' and a the SFF's 'jua kali' ethos. There yet remains a significant and interesting opportunity, in context of a turn to consider the 'culturalisation of development', to offer a cultural and practice-based theorisation of neoliberalism in contemporary forms of development in urban Africa. However, such an approach sits beyond the scope of this present work.

To return to overarching considerations of the place of a practice-based approach in contemporary critical media studies, if this present thesis might be seen to present one methodological advancement, it might be in terms of the critical potential of narrative and storytelling. The role of critical ethnography in the form I have attempted to explore here might be usefully seen as a researcher's simultaneous study of and inculpation within the

stories and narratives that delineate social and cultural life. Such a critical narrative approach has proven particularly useful when confronted with the 'single story' of an African development, put forth not as a way to 'discover the truth' of development as many post-development scholars have tried – by cutting away the myths to find the local realities that lurk within them – but by looking for other stories and counter-histories of developmental modernity. Taken in this sense, this thesis has sought to present a critical and narrative account of one small corner of life and human practice in a very big and very changeable city; a city of hustlers and development professionals; of refugees and European economic migrants; of creativity and overwhelming articulations about the social and political utility of media technology and cultural production.

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